

TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION
AND ITS EFFECT ON SCHOOL CULTURE

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AND ITS EFFECT ON SCHOOL CULTURE

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Abstract

The ideas of school culture and community-based education existed in educational research for decades. However, there was a lack of studies on the interaction between school culture and community-based education. The research question was, *How does community-based education affect school culture according to teachers' perceptions?* Teachers from the two high schools in the Christiana (pseudonym) School district participated in a survey about school culture and community-based education. Three teachers from Masingo (pseudonym) School and two from Redhill (pseudonym) High School participated in individual interviews and a school-based focus group. Data from both schools showed that the three major themes were the importance of relationships, both teacher-student and administration-staff, the availability of in-school resources, and the prevalence of community partnerships. All three of these ideas influenced the overall school culture of each school, and the school with stronger relationships had a more positive school culture.

Keywords: school culture, community-based education, relationships, in-school resources, community partnerships

Dedication

To my family and friends, as well as my school community that has become like family.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank everyone that participated in this study. Also, thank you to Dr. Davidson, Dr. Taylor, and Dr. Dalton for your extensive editing and guidance throughout this dissertation process.

I would also like to thank my family for allowing me the privilege to continue my education to the doctoral level. You all have always emphasized the importance of education, and I hope to show that to others.

Last but not least, I would like to express my appreciation for the educators that have dedicated their lives to community-based education. You have shown me that the idea of a school is much more than merely a building; it's a family in and of itself. One day, I hope to inspire the next generation of educators like you all have inspired me.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

People often wondered what made the difference between a “good” school where children were successful and enjoyed attending school and a “bad” school where violence and poor performance abounded. Many scholars argued that school culture was a key element in making a school successful or not (Deal & Peterson, 1990, Villani, 1998, Redding & Corbett, 2018).

To determine if school culture had such a major impact on the overall performance of schools, one needed to understand what school culture was. According to Deal & Peterson (1990), two of the most well-known scholars on school culture, defined it as the values, beliefs and traditions that revealed the character of a school. Kent Peterson and Terrance Deal (1998), further defined school culture as:

The underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools (p.28). Simply put, school culture was not only what a school does, but also how the school does it. The culture of a school did not have to be written down; however, people noticed the culture and felt it throughout the campus of the school (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Some doubted the importance of the culture of a school; however, Deal and Peterson (1990) observed that school culture influenced the productivity of school and their achievement. This influence was positive and negative. Positive school cultures saw positive results for productivity as well as achievement. In addition, successful schools had a culture of high expectations, of both students and faculty, and a belief that everyone achieved those expectations (Deal & Peterson, 1990). In schools with positive school culture, students, staff, and

administration had high expectations and held students accountable. Children attending schools with positive cultures enjoyed their time in school and showed respect for fellow students and adult staff members. This resulted in fewer problems with attendance and a decrease in disciplinary issues (Villani, 1999).

Research Problem

While having a positive school culture was a great way to improve education, some schools were not positive—they were toxic environments. Studying or teaching in a school that had a toxic environment could be difficult for all. Toxic schools existed and even good schools could have toxic subcultures. Toxic schools were fragmented, have little hope, and students and staff were often negative. Toxic subcultures were destructive groups of parents or pockets of teachers that thrived on negativity and bashed new efforts with reminders of past failures. However, there was hope because school culture could be changed for the better (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Change was not easy; however, a toxic school did not have to be toxic forever. School leaders that worked together to develop a positive school culture made school culture more positive. Through understanding the current school culture, school leaders worked to improve the culture of the school. Leaders needed to understand the traditions associated with the school, which were a part of the community's hopes and dreams for the school (Deal & Peterson, 1990). By taking elements of the old, the school used the past as inspiration for the future. This helped not to alienate long-time community members, who were also stakeholders in the school. Creating a shared sense of purpose among teachers, students, and community members contributed to a positive school culture (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Traditions—new and old—were used to aid in learning and to develop a positive school culture.

Purpose of the Study

Community schools were a staple in the American education system since the beginning of formalized education. While the function and set up of these schools evolved, the goal of providing quality education and involving the community in the educational process had long been a hallmark of community-based education (Stack, 2016). According to the Institute for Educational Leadership's *Community School Standards* (2018),

A community school is a public school—the hub of its neighborhood, uniting families, educators and community partners to provide all students with top-quality academics, enrichment, health and social services, and opportunities to succeed in school and in life (p. 2)

Schools with positive culture utilized all stakeholders. Stakeholders like students, parents, teachers, and community members, worked together to improve school culture. Stakeholders told of the good things happening at a positive school, which then led to more positive outcomes (Peterson & Deal, 1998). In today's era of social media, this was a vital tool in changing the reputation of a school. Too often the terrible events made the news, but schools with positive school culture communicated the important, positive events that were occurring at the school (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Research Question

How does community-based education affect school culture according to teachers' perceptions?

Rationale for the Study

The Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA), which President Obama signed into law in 2015 (US Department of Education), had sections pertaining to community schools. A public

elementary or secondary school was considered a full-service community school if it

(A) participates in community-based effort to coordinate and integrate educational, developmental, family, health, and other comprehensive services through community-based organizations and public and private partnerships; (B) provides access to such services in school to students, families, and the community, such as access during the school year (including before- and after-school hours and weekends), as well as during the summer (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2018, p.3)

There was support for schools to utilize the traditional components of community-based education as well as provide quality and appropriate education to students. Community schools focused on quality teaching of engaging curriculum in order for students to benefit the most out of their educational experience. Community-based schools also provided wraparound supports and engaged families and stakeholders (The Center for Popular Democracy, Coalition for Community Schools, & Southern Education Foundation, 2016)

Theoretical Framework: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

One of the best-known motivational theories, which was often used in the child development and educational fields, was the work of Abraham Maslow (Robbins & Judge, 2017). According to Maslow's research, human motivation was driven towards the ultimate goal of self-actualization. Achieving self-actualization was only possible once the other lower-level needs are fulfilled (Kovach, 2018).

Maslow's hierarchy was most often illustrated as a triangle. Basic needs were located on the bottom and self-actualization is at the point. The levels were listed in ascending order as follows: physiological need; safety need; need of love, affection, and belongingness; need for

esteem; and need for self-actualization (Simons, Irwin, & Drinnien, 1987). Before a person or child advanced to a higher level, the needs of the lower level must be met.

The lowest level was physiological needs. This level consisted of basic needs for survival like food, water, and oxygen. Once the physiological needs were satisfied, the next level was the need for safety. At this level, the person was concerned with order, stability, security, as well as shelter in terms of a place to live. With the safety needs fulfilled, the next higher level was the need for love, affection, and belongingness (Tichy, 2017). The primary need for this stage was coping with loneliness through giving and receiving love and affection as well as making social connections with others. The fourth level was the need for esteem—both self-esteem and esteem from others. According to Simons, Irwin, and Drinnien (1987), “humans have a need for a stable, firmly based, high level of self-respect, and respect from others” (p.1). If this occurred, the person felt valued and had high self-esteem. If it did not occur, the person battled feelings of worthlessness. The apex of the hierarchy was the need for self-actualization. Self-actualization was known as accomplishing what a person was born to do; however, this could not be realized if the needs addressed in the lower levels of the hierarchy are not met (Tichy, 2017).

Researcher Positionality Statement

The researcher was a teacher at a PreK-12th grade public school in rural East Tennessee. The school served about 650 students ranging in age from 4 to 18 years old. This particular school had more than 15 different administrators in the past 10 years. The school had approximately 60 licensed teachers. The school was part of a county school district with nine schools in East Tennessee. All of the schools in the district qualified as Title I Schools.

The researcher had been employed as a high school Spanish teacher at the same school for all six years of her teaching career. During that time, she grew to appreciate the unique situation of the school. As one of the schools in the state that have remained having all grades in one building, she questioned why more schools did not follow this approach. It was a special experience to get to watch student progress through the grades, knowing them as a small child to an awkward middle school student to a high school graduate—and beyond.

Although the academic record of the school has been mixed over its 100-year existence, there was considerable growth in the last five years. The ACT score rose to better than the state average for 2017 and 2018. However, as previously mentioned, there was a high turnover among staff and administration over the last decade. These challenges caused the researcher to think about the unique challenges and benefits of a community school.

Definition of Terms

School culture. “The underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools” (Peterson & Deal, 1998, p.28).

Community school. “A community school is a public school—the hub of its neighborhood, uniting families, educators and community partners to provide all students with top-quality academics, enrichment, health and social services, and opportunities to succeed in school and in life” (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2018, p.2).

Organization of the Study

This study will be organized according to the Carson-Newman Dissertation Guidelines. Chapter one served as an introduction and overview of the study. Chapter two reviewed relevant

literature related to school culture and community-based education. Chapter three was the methodology for the study, which is a phenomenological study. Chapter four was a presentation of the findings from the study described in chapter three. Chapter five was the conclusion based on this study. This chapter also included implications of this study on the field of public education as well as recommendations for future studies.

Summary

School culture was a critical component of a school's overall success. Community schools existed since the beginning of the American education system; however, they adapted to meet the needs of students. It was important to understand what positive elements of school culture were present in community schools.

CHAPTER TWO: Review of the Literature

The concepts of community schools and school culture were not new ideas in the field of public education. The idea of organizational culture and school culture began in the 1980s. Researchers wanted to identify the key component of what makes a school successful. Dating even earlier, schools were the center of the larger community for over a century in the United States (Jacobson, Villarreal, Muñoz, & Mahaffey, 2018). The idea of community-based education had origins in the field of social work before the turn of the 20th century. The ideas and reasons behind community-based education evolved with the change in society and politics.

Recent legislation such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of December of 2015 caused renewed interest in school-community partnerships to meet the needs of children (Min, Anderson, & Chen, 2017). The ESSA invested over \$17 billion of federal funding annually into specific community schools' programs (The Center for Popular Democracy, Coalition for Community Schools, & Southern Education Foundation, 2016). The definition of school culture, methods to improve school culture, community school, and how the principles of community schools positively impacted school culture and the American education system will be discussed in detail during this chapter.

School Culture

The roots of the study of school culture originated in the 1980s. During this time, there was a shift in the field of organizational science. Organizational scientists adopted the cultural perspective that had long been in use in anthropology. Researchers applied these techniques to businesses, and educational researchers later applied the same technique to studying schools (Berkemeyer, Junker, Bos, & Müthing, 2015).

Numerous educational researchers contributed to the field of research on school culture. School culture was defined as the values, beliefs, and traditions that reveal the character of a school (Deal & Peterson, 1990). Kent Peterson and Terrance Deal (1998), two of the most well-known scholars on school culture, further defined school culture as:

The underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools (p.28).

In addition to the overall culture of the school, it was noted that the numerous other subcultures also contributed to the culture of a school. Students and teachers brought their backgrounds to the school, which reflected the culture of their families or neighborhoods. Additionally, the school had to consider the culture of the community that the school serves. In today's world, there was also the culture of the media and social media that impacts the culture of a school (Redding & Corbett, 2018).

These subcultures interacted and affected one another in positive and negative ways. Schools with overall positive cultures devised methods to use the various subcultures within a school as a method to engage students. This engagement was not successful without carefully planned training and support for teachers and staff. Staff training included how their culture and biases impacted their perceptions of students. They also received training on a variety of cultures and linguistic backgrounds of students of the school (Redding & Corbett, 2018).

Impacts of positive school culture. Some educators doubted the importance of the culture of a school; however, Deal and Peterson (1990) observed that school culture can influence the productivity and achievement of school. This influence could be both positive and negative. Positive school cultures produced positive results for productivity as well as

achievement. Children that attended schools with positive cultures enjoyed their time in school and showed respect for fellow students. This resulted in fewer problems with attendance and a decrease in disciplinary issues (Villani, 1999).

High expectations were part of the overall culture of an institution, including a belief that everyone can achieve those expectations (Deal & Peterson, 1990). In schools with positive school culture, students, staff, and administration had high expectations and were held accountable. It was not enough to simply have high expectations and hold people accountable; another crucial component of schools with positive school cultures was that administration provided students and staff alike with support in order to help them meet and exceed those high expectations (Redding & Corbett, 2018). Administration provided teachers with the appropriate support in terms of instructional coaching, supplies, and assistance in holding students accountable to the high standards. Staff supported students by forming positive relationships with students and challenging students while encouraging them.

Many components contributed to positive school culture. A critical aspect of positive school cultures was a sense of respect and trust. Administration modeled to teachers and teachers modeled for students. Respect and trust were critical components for an environment, especially in the school setting. The problems and challenges associated with education made teamwork and open, honest communication a necessity. One way that leaders could establish trust among staff was to openly admit their mistakes (Redding & Corbett, 2018). This showed the staff that the leaders of the school value open and honest communication and were willing to admit when something did not go the way that they had hoped. It contributed to the positive school environment by modeling the importance of creative problem solving, risk-taking, and reflection on the positive and negative effects of decisions.

Toxic schools and ways to improve school culture. While having positive school culture was a great way to improve education, some school cultures were not positive—they were toxic environments. Studying or teaching in a school that had a toxic environment could be difficult. Toxic schools were a problem throughout education and even good schools could have toxic subcultures. Toxic schools were fragmented, had little hope, and students and staff were often negative regarding change (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Toxic subcultures were negative groups of parents or pockets of teachers that thrive on negativity and focus on past failures. However, there was hope because school culture could be changed for the better by utilizing strategies for improvement (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

The broken windows theory, a criminology theory, also applied to schools. The theory stated that when windows were left broken, it sent the message that no one looked after the building, and no one cared about the damage enough to fix it. The theory proposed that minor issues, like leaving windows broken, signaled to others that the behavior was acceptable—or at least not being punished—and therefore continued. As it applied to education, sometimes fixing small issues made significant improvements to a school. Small things added up to create a change in school culture. These changes helped create a positive school culture by focusing on small changes like creating a shared mission and goals, demanding high academic achievement, creating and enforcing rules for behavior, supporting teachers through leadership, and strong classroom management with clear student goals. These small initiatives worked together to create a culture of high expectations, which was often considered to be the first cornerstone of a positive and high-achieving school culture (Goodwin, 2010).

Change was not easy; however, a toxic school did not have to be toxic forever. School leaders worked together to develop positive school culture. Through understanding the current

school culture, school leaders worked to improve the culture of the school. Leaders understood the traditions associated with the school, which were a part of the community's hopes and dreams for the school (Deal & Peterson, 1990). By taking elements of the old, the school used the past as inspiration for a new future. This helped avoid the alienation of long-time community members, who were also stakeholders in the school. Creating a shared sense of purpose among teachers, students, and community members contributed to a positive school culture (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Positive schools used traditions—new and old—to aid in learning and to develop a positive school culture.

Shifting culture: Three key practices (Redding & Corbett). Educational researchers Redding and Corbett studied school culture, especially the method of shifting school cultures. They identified three key practices for schools that hoped to transition to more positive school culture.

The first key practice was to build a strong community intensely focused on student learning. Key to this was to have everyone involved in the school to concentrate on helping create a culture where students work to the best of their ability (Redding & Corbett, 2018). This included everyone from the principal to the cafeteria workers; everyone needed to contribute to the culture of high expectations. This also involved stakeholders outside of the school.

Schools with positive culture utilized all stakeholders. Stakeholders like students, parents, teachers, and community members, worked together to improve school culture. Stakeholders often told about the good things happening at a positive school, which then led to more positive outcomes (Peterson & Deal, 1998). In today's era of social media, this was a vital tool in changing the reputation of a school. Too often, the terrible events were newsworthy, but

schools with positive school culture shared the important good events that were occurring at the school (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Overall, the first key practice focused on creating open and honest communication that strengthened relationships and contributed positively to the vision of the school. Administration facilitated the success of the first key practice by creating structures for exchanging information and common messages (Redding & Corbett, 2018). This was as simple as condensing the morning announcements into an email to save on instructional time or maintaining an updated website for parents to access information about the school easily. Another aspect that administration improved was the way to share accomplishments and frustrations. This was not limited to the accomplishment of students—although that should certainly have been shared. Administration acknowledging staff accomplishments was also crucial as a way to maintain high staff morale.

Another key practice for change was to solicit and act upon stakeholder input. Since stakeholders both inside and outside of the school worked together to support student learning, it was important that they felt their voice was heard and their opinions were wanted. Redding and Corbett recommended accomplishing this by collecting data from stakeholders in the form of surveys, focus groups, and questionnaires (Redding & Corbett, 2018). Administration could then analyze the data to determine any common concerns and look for ways to address them.

The school removed mistrust between stakeholders and the school by asking for opinions, sharing the results, and actively taking action on the issues. Performing these steps led to acceptance, empowerment, trust, and ownership among all stakeholders (Redding & Corbett, 2018). Actively soliciting opinions from various stakeholders and acting upon concerns validated the shared sense of vision that successful schools with positive cultures have.

The last of the key practices was to engage students and families in pursuing educational goals. Administration encouraged teachers to create classroom cultures that focused on learning and meeting goals. Teachers also provided appropriate academic, emotional, and social supports for students. In this environment, students became independent learners that were able to set goals for their futures. Administration also encouraged and enabled teachers to achieve these goals by working hard (Redding & Corbett, 2018).

In addition to time within the school, families of students also engaged at schools with positive school culture. The school helped families and students to work together to make educational goals for the students. Also, in this environment, schools empowered families and encouraged them to guide students in their goals and hold students accountable for meeting their goals. Rather than being isolated and having an “us versus them” mentality regarding the family-school relationships, both sides cooperated for the benefit of the child, which led to improved student achievement (Redding & Corbett, 2018).

Importance of Relationships in School Culture

One of the fundamental concepts behind positive school culture was the importance of the relationship. Relationships were critical among all stakeholders of a school—from the highest paid administration to the youngest students. Much of the responsibility of creating a school with a culture of trusting relationships fell to the leader. Having strong, trusting relationships encouraged faculty to buy in for changes that the leaders initiate. Also, students were more likely to participate in change when there was an environment of trust and collective decision-making (Hollingworth, Olsen, Asikin-Garmager, Winn, 2018).

Leaders created good relationships by taking the time to get to know their staff (Hollingworth, Olsen, Asikin-Garmager, Winn, 2018). Although being a school administrator

was a demanding and time-consuming job, the effort leaders put into forging strong relationships with the staff was incredibly beneficial for the school. Schools where administration truly knew the staff had higher job satisfaction, commitment, and morale among the staff (Hollingworth, Olsen, Asikin-Garmager, Winn, 2018).

Effective communication was a cornerstone of strong relationships—especially when it comes to initiating change in a school. It was important for the leader to explain reasons and show research-based evidence that led to the change. This showed that the rationale behind the change was well thought out and not a rash decision based on emotion. Also, it was essential to start with small changes rather than implementing broad, sweeping changes all at once. Another critical component of change being effective was the support to make the changes.

Administration had to provide staff and students with the appropriate training and support in order for the change to be successful (Hollingworth, Olsen, Asikin-Garmager, Winn, 2018).

In addition to effective communication for change, effective communication about disagreements and challenges was crucial to the culture of a successful school. Not everyone agreed with every decision—even with evidence to support the change. Research (Hollingworth, Olsen, Asikin-Garmager, Winn, 2018) advocated for an “open-door policy” where teachers and students were encouraged to stop by, without an appointment, and talk with leaders about both problems and successes. Open and honest conversations about disagreements proved incredibly important to the success of a school. While the teacher did not always leave the conversation with his/her desired outcome, the teacher walked away believing his/her concerns were heard and would be taken into consideration (Hollingworth, Olsen, Asikin-Garmager, Winn, 2018).

Another important aspect of building strong relationships was modeling appropriate behavior. Administration needed to model appropriate interaction with both students and staff.

This needed to occur both in informal and formal situations. Teachers and students imitated the behavior and pattern of interactions that they saw from administration (Hollingworth, Olsen, Asikin-Garmager, Winn, 2018).

History of Community Schools in the United States

The roots of community schools began in the field of social work—not in education. The ideas of Jane Addams (1860-1935) showcased some of the cornerstones of community education. Addams was a social reformer responsible for Chicago’s Hull House. Hull House was a settlement house for immigrants. The goal of the Hull House was for new immigrants to establish themselves and find stable work and housing once immigrating to the United States (Jacobson, Villarreal, Muñoz, & Mahaffey, 2018). Addams was credited as the founder of social work and her work applied beyond the concern of housing to other issues facing the American society.

Another early champion of community education was John Dewey (1859-1952). Dewey was an American educational reformer and philosopher who was responsible for training numerous educators that would carry on his ideology regarding community education. Dewey’s philosophy on education was that it should create “interest in all persons in furthering the general good, so that they will find their own happiness realized in what they can do to improve the condition of others” (Dewey, 2008).

Dewey’s and Addams’s teaching and philosophies were evident in the community schools of the 1930s. The Great Depression characterized the 1930s, as many Americans faced uncertain economic futures brought on by unemployment. The 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act created planned homesteads and communities for unemployed farmers and miners across the country. This led to the establishment of communities and community-based schools.

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was a strong advocate for this act and community education (Stack, 2016).

Many saw the community school as the solution to the woes of the time. Community schools had a strong sense of social justice because many believed that the failures of society during the Roaring 20s had led to the economic collapse of the country. The community school was a central institution that could be utilized to improve the lives of many community members (Stack, 2016).

Elsie Clapp (1879-1965) was an expert on rural community education. She oversaw the implementation of schools under the National Industrial Recovery Act (1933). Under her direction, the goal was for the community school to be fully integrated into the community and responsive to the unique needs of the community it serves (Stack, 2016).

The next era in community schools was the 1950s and the Cold War Era. The major transition from the community schools of the 1930s was the emphasis on students being citizen-centered and service-centered. This was largely due to ongoing hostilities with the Soviet Union. Community-based education focused on creating the next generation of scientists, engineers, and mathematicians for the United States to win the Cold War and defeat the forces of communism. Like much of the political propaganda of the day, the rhetoric of the community school focused on cooperation for the sake of democracy against the common enemy of the Soviet Union (Stack, 2016).

Beginning in the 1960s, community schools began to reach out to businesses to aid in the wellbeing of children. The schools of Flint, Michigan, reached out to Charles Stewart Mott, founder of General Motors, to fund the use of parks and schools beyond school hours. The funding covered various activities and programming designed to keep children busy and active.

This partnership, known as the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, led to the establishment of the National Center for Community Education, which fostered relationships with teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities in order to train future educators about utilizing community resources and connections (Stack, 2016).

The political and social turmoil of the late 1960s and 1970s led to a shift in community education. This shifted back to developing a sense of community and collaboration to address the needs of the community. However, the 1983 publication of *A Nation At Risk* by the Reagan administration detailed concerns about the state of public education in America. The Reagan era was characterized by the emphasis of “individualism over community and competition over cooperation” (Stack, 2016, p. 49). This national push was a significant challenge to the long-held ideas of community education. In *A Nation At Risk* (1983), there was concern among the nation’s educators due to the lack of teachers’ voices. This era began the shift towards assessment and high stakes testing that would continue to be present in education for generations to come (Stack, 2016).

One of the responses to the statements in *A National At Risk* (Stack, 2016), was the development of the Full-Service Community School (FSCS) model. The FSCS model was often utilized in urban schools (Min, Anderson, & Chen, 2017). The main idea behind FSCS was to combat the fact that students in these situations often do not have access to the social capital that other more upwardly mobile students might have.

Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS). US Department of Education defined FSCSs as public elementary or secondary schools that collaborate with “local educational agencies (LEAs); and community-based organizations, non-profit organizations, and other public or private entities” (USDOE, 2014, para.2). The primary purpose of FSCSs was to “provide

comprehensive academic, social and health services for students, students' family members, and community members that will result in improved educational outcomes for children” (para.3). In 2009, the Full-Service Community Schools Act passed. This renewed emphasis on the importance of partnerships between schools and community partners—especially to support at-risk youth (Min, Anderson, & Chen, 2017).

One aspect that made the FSCS model different from other models of community-based education was the emphasis on increasing opportunities for parents. The school serving as a central point for community service integrations created ways for parents to expand their social connections and increase their social capital by forming connections with other community members and organizations. This aided in strengthening parent-child relationships as well as parent-teacher relationships because parents had access to support and resources that they might not be able to have without the help of the school. Another benefit was the formation of stronger neighborhood interconnections. These stronger communities benefited children, parents, and the school because other businesses and organizations were more willing to work with the school in the future (Chen, Anderson, & Watkins, 2016).

In addition to the development of the social capital of parents, another important component of the FSCS model was the individualization of the funding to meet the specific needs of the community being served by the school. FSCS funding reflected the specific needs of the individual community, students, and families. Examples of this included funding for lead paint testing if the area has older dwellings that could be affected. While this funding was needed in one community, it could be utterly useless in the next. A different community with a high immigrant population could have used that funding for English language classes for adults

(Min, Anderson, & Chen, 2017). The flexibility of funding to meet the specific needs of the community and students was one benefit to the FSCS model.

Definition of Community School

According to the Institute for Educational Leadership's *Community School Standards* (2018),

A community school is a public school—the hub of its neighborhood, uniting families, educators and community partners to provide all students with top-quality academics, enrichment, health and social services, and opportunities to succeed in school and in life (p.2)

Community schools were also

hyperlocal institutions where neighbors, students, faith-based leaders, teacher, principals, school district officials, and parents can come together to share their concerns and aspirations, combine their resources, and find effective and sustainable ways to respond to challenges such as neighborhood violence, hunger, housing shortages, and environmental pollution (Jacobson, Villarreal, Muñoz, & Mahaffey, 2018, p.10).

While many community schools have been around for decades, educational reformers argue that any school, whether it is rural, suburban, or urban, can become a community school. There are currently over 98,000 community schools serving more than 5 million students (The Center for Popular Democracy, Coalition for Community Schools, & Southern Education Foundation, 2016).

Community School Standards

The Institute for Educational Leadership published *Community School Standards* in 2018. In the text, the Community School Guiding Principles were detailed. Each will be

discussed at length, incorporating other supporting literature.

Pursue equity. One of the Guiding Principles stated that community schools worked to negate the negative aspects of poverty and institutionalized biases that often kept students from achieving their full potential (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2018). Many community schools served students who were disadvantaged. Community schools sought to provide services and advantages enjoyed by wealthier peers to children facing societal and economic disadvantages (Oaks, Maier, & Daniel, 2017).

Socio-economic disadvantages. Living in poverty created additional challenges for students (Murnane, 2007). In 2009, the drop-out rate of low-income students was five times higher than their better-off peers (Chapman, Laird, Ifill, & KewalRamani, 2011). Children living in poverty often attended schools that had weak leadership, with under-qualified or under-performing teachers, and had learning challenges are addressed insufficiently (Murnane, 2007). As a result, many children did not obtain the skills necessary to be successful adults. This led to many students repeating the cycle of poverty with their own children because they were often unable to get jobs that provide a living wage (Murnane, 2007).

In addition to often attending low-quality schools, children living in poverty often suffered from other issues such as a lack of adequate nutrition and limited access to healthcare (Krashen, 2016). Children who grow up in secure, stable homes learned social skills that helped them to be more successful in school. Children who grow up in poverty often did not learn these skills and struggled with cooperative learning and relationships with peers and teachers. This resulted in lower grades, which may decrease self-esteem (Jensen, 2009).

Low-income students struggled to reach the same levels of academic success as their more affluent peers due to the impact poverty had on available resources. Many low-income

families and communities did not understand the value of education and did not actively participate in their child's education (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). Also, children in poverty had limited access to reading material. There were often fewer public libraries and limited classroom and school libraries in schools with a large number of students in poverty. This lack of resources created students who struggle with reading, and reading is a vital component of school success (Krashen, 2016).

As well as challenges for students, poverty created additional challenges for schools serving many children living in poverty. Due to the nature of government-subsidized housing and school zoning, many children living in poverty, often having more significant learning needs, were concentrated in a particular school or school district, thus intensifying the challenges faced by these schools (Murnane, 2007). High-poverty, high-minority schools received less funding and were more likely to be staffed by less-experienced teachers than more affluent schools (Jerald, as cited in Jensen, 2009). Schools often had difficulty hiring and retaining skilled teachers due to the challenging working environment and labor agreements often reached by teacher unions (Murnane, 2007). Schools in these situations had trouble developing skilled teachers because of a lack of funding and a lack of beginning skills. There was also insufficient training and professional development (Murnane, 2007).

Societal disadvantages. Community schools needed to be aware of and actively seek to correct racial and cultural disadvantages that were found in public education across the United States. While there had been significant strides for racial and cultural equity, there was still much progress to be made. There were many methods that community schools could use to pursue equity in terms of race and cultures for all students.

For many years, members of the Black community suppressed their cultures and racial identity while in predominantly White social institutions, such as schools. They did not show anything that differentiated them from the dominant White culture (Generett, 2017). This sentiment was similar for many people of color as society expected for them to assimilate into the White culturally dominated field of education. Historically, there was not much regard for incorporating other cultures into the realm of education.

This was also true for children of immigrants. Many immigrants were children of color, which had challenges in the predominantly White educational environments. This caused difficulty in feeling love and forming an attachment to others. A language barrier that many immigrants experienced can exacerbate the difficulty forming an attachment. In addition to the challenges with language and forming attachments, many immigrants were from developing countries and lack in social capital that could help this adjust to a new country. This led to struggles to provide basic necessities for the children to fulfill the lower levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Generett, 2017).

Studies showed that community schools were effective in closing well-documented achievement gaps in terms of race and socioeconomic status (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). Through the appropriate utilization of the Guiding Principles of Community Schools, the struggles that many students faced could be alleviated to allow for learning.

Framework for multicultural schools. Educational researcher Sonia Nieto extensively researched multicultural schools. Her framework for multicultural schools developed as a continuum for schools to move along in the hopes of reaching a truly multicultural school.

Although not one of Nieto's levels, monocultural was the absence of multiculturalism. In this type of environment, the dominant culture made no difference in students and treated all the

same. People saw themselves as “colorblind” and assumed that everyone is a member of the dominant culture. Schools viewed low performing students as lazy and noncompliant. Potentially controversial topics such as sexism, racism, and social justice were avoided and not discussed (Neito, 2010).

The lowest level of Neito’s framework was tolerance. In this stage, differences were acknowledged and superficially added into the curriculum. Teachers were supposed to be sensitive to differences in cultures. However, assimilation into the dominant culture was the ultimate goal (Neito, 2010).

The next level was acceptance. At this stage, teachers included information about other cultures into the standard curriculum. Also, the curriculum included literature from various cultures. The school was not considered a melting pot, but rather a salad bowl. In the salad bowl analogy, each culture and students contributed to the culture by bringing unique views and beliefs to the school (Neito, 2010).

Higher on the framework was respect. Schools with respect for multiculturalism admired and valued diversity. Literature was multicultural without being forced or required of teachers. Sensitive topics, including racism and sexism, were openly discussed and debated in a respectful way (Neito, 2010).

The highest level of Neito’s framework was affirmation, solidarity, and critique. In this level, diversity from students and their families was embraced and openly accepted. Social justice was the basis for all learning and took an active role in discussing and challenging the status quo. The challenges of multicultural communities were discussed and examined. Any issue was considered a valid topic of discussion as long as it was approached respectfully (Neito, 2010).

Culturally relevant pedagogy. After analyzing and understanding the current level of multiculturalism at the school, the next step was to develop culturally relevant and sensitive pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy sought to close the gap between the culture of students and teachers. In this view, culture and academics were not separate issues, but rather coordinating components of learning that can go together. Students learned academic skills as well as cultural competency under this viewpoint, which prepared them for engaging in democratic processes and fighting against social injustice both during their time in school as well as when they become adults (Underwood, Kimmel, Forest, Dickinson, 2015).

Many educators were unsure of how to approach culturally relevant pedagogy. This was especially true for using culturally relevant pedagogy as an instrument for social justice. Since educators had historically not been exposed to this, it made the transition to culturally relevant pedagogy that much more difficult. The use of culturally relevant pedagogy challenged the educational and political system that had traditionally repressed students of color as well as tried to assimilate them into the dominant White culture (Underwood, Kimmel, Forest, Dickinson, 2015).

One specific example of utilizing culturally sensitive pedagogy was in a study by Phuong-Mai, Terlouw, Pilot, and Elliot. This study focused on the effect culture has on cooperative learning. Cooperative learning was a common educational method where students work in formal or informal groups to accomplish a task. Although cooperative learning had many variations, it was a pedagogy that aligned with western cultural values. The aspects of cooperative learning had to be adjusted to meet the cultural norms of non-western students (Phuong-Mai, Terlouw, Pilot, & Elliot, 2009).

In the Phuong-Mai, Terlouw, Pilot, and Elliot study, the study analyzed students with Vietnamese culture while performing cooperative learning tasks. The study found that Vietnamese students liked having a formal leader. If a leader was not formally selected, students looked toward whatever informal leader emerged as the leader for the activity. However, “real” leaders that were selected by the teachers were viewed more positively and with more respect (Phuong-Mai, Terlouw, Pilot, & Elliot, 2009).

Additionally, Vietnamese students preferred working in groups where they had existing friends. Students said they learned better in these groups because the group identity and interactions were already somewhat established. Overall, Vietnamese students in cooperative learning scenarios preferred to work with friends and a teacher-appointed leader. These different cultural desires needed to be taken into consideration when lesson planning for a multicultural school (Phuong-Mai, Terlouw, Pilot, & Elliot, 2009).

Whole-child approach to education. According to the Institute for Educational Leadership, learning must go beyond mastery of academic material. This must include the social, behavioral as well as academic needs of students.

Many children suffered unimaginable circumstances before they entered the doors of the school. As many as 34 million children had endured at least one adverse childhood experience, or ACE. Students who identify as LGBTQ, students of color, and students living in poverty were statistically more likely to have more child- and household-centered ACEs (Gaffney, 2019). ACEs included child abuse, parental neglect, parental incarceration, addiction, housing instability, and other challenges (Kris, 2018).

Many students lived in environments that do not help their academic, social, or behavioral development. Common stressors that school-aged children faced include poverty,

abuse, neglect, social disruption like foster care, family breakdown, loss of a loved one, domestic violence, and responsibilities of care, such as older children being responsible for younger children. Long term and chronic stressors were more damaging than acute, sudden events (Roffey, 2016).

A theory often used in child development and educational fields was created by Abraham Maslow (Robbins & Judge, 2017). According to Maslow's research, human motivation was driven towards the ultimate goal of self-actualization. Achieving self-actualization was only possible once the other lower-level needs were met (Kovach, 2018). The levels were listed in ascending order as follows: physiological needs, safety needs, needs of love, affection, and belongingness, needs for esteem, and need for self-actualization (Simons, Irwin, & Drinnien, 1987). Before a person or child could advance to a higher level, the needs of the lower level needed to be met.

ACEs impacted a student's ability to meet the lower levels of Maslow's hierarchy, which made it impossible to reach the higher levels, including learning and self-actualization. Maslow believed that societal institutions could be a major hindrance in one progressing through the hierarchy of needs—especially in the field of education (Tichy, 2017).

Self-actualization was defined by Maslow “as one who has the desire to become more than what he/she is currently” (Maslow, 1954, p.37). There were two areas of self-actualization: openness to experience and reference to self. Both of these components could impact students. Teachers could help by encouraging students and having high expectations. This contributed to students' self-actualization and resilience. Resilient students were those who did not appear to be negatively affected by risk factors (Tichy, 2017). Although students experienced ACEs, resilient students were still able to function efficiently in school.

Trauma-informed approach. Trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive schools were in high demand. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defined trauma as one events or circumstances that were physically or emotionally harmful to students with lasting negative side effects. Trauma-informed organizations needed to meet four requirements established by the SAMHSA. The first was to realize the impact of trauma and methods of recovery. Next, the organization had to be able to recognize the signs of trauma. The organization also incorporated knowledge about trauma into the policies and procedures of the organization. Lastly, the organization actively worked to avoid re-traumatization. In order to be considered a trauma-informed school, the school needed to fulfill all of these qualifications (Gaffney, 2019).

Many teachers looked for ways to reach students that had been exposed to trauma or could be identified as trauma-sensitive. There were strategies that can be used in individual classroom environments to help students that might be dealing with ACEs and other traumatic experiences. Leaders encouraged teachers to look beyond the behavior of the student. Some behavior might be interpreted as defiant when often students were only showing their fears due to unstable home situations (The Room 241 Teacher). Another meaningful way that teachers created trauma-informed classroom environments was to focus on building relationships with students. Children that experienced trauma needed deep connections with caring adults, and teachers had a unique ability to spend time and develop relationships with students (The Room 241 Teacher).

In addition to fostering strong relationships, a safe and predictable classroom environment was critical to creating a trauma-sensitive classroom environment. A lack of control and chaos often characterized trauma. To combat this uncomfortable feeling for students

that had experienced trauma, establishing a clear and predictable routine that provided students with stability was recommended (The Room 241 Teacher). This could have been as simple as following a set schedule and letting students know in advance of any changes to the schedule. Being on a set schedule helped all students—not just those affected by trauma—feel stable and secure in the school environment.

Curriculum and activities traumatized students. One example of this was the content in the curriculum, such as teaching *To Kill a Mockingbird* as an example of racism “back then.” This was traumatizing because people are still experiencing racism today. Other activities that retraumatized students were journaling or acting out a traumatic experience. Also, tracking students negatively impacted a student’s self-identity because it gave a negative message to students. Even though educators designed tracking to support struggling students, recent studies showed that tracking could do more harm than good for students (Gaffney, 2019).

Defiance, disengagement, and disruption negatively impacted the school and needed to be addressed to help the traumatized student and other students. When dealing with acute stressors, students were confused, angry, and or engaged in self-blame. The community school also accounted for major community stressors like chronic drug/alcohol abuse, gang violence, and traumas associated with refugees and asylum seekers (Roffey, 2016).

Schools made the most of the time they had with students that might have experienced trauma by promoting positive factors to help negate the negative impacts associated with trauma. One strategy schools fostered was building resilience in students, because relationships supported resilience. Students needed at least one person they could trust that believed in them and loved them in order to thrive. While some students found this relationship at home, some needed a person at school to fulfill this role—even if it was temporary. In addition to strong

relationships, students exposed to trauma needed high expectations to reach their full potential. Students needed consistency, warmth, and acceptance to grow (Roffey, 2016).

Wraparound services. The whole-child approach to education needed to include integrated student supports or wraparound services. Wraparound services were when students are provided opportunities for academic, health, and social service support at school (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). This included medical, dental, and vision care, as well as mental health services. Wraparound services were also important for the child's family and could include housing assistance. Additionally, wraparound services included academic intervention and tutoring after school hours. This approach accounted for Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs by understanding that students must have the lower order nonacademic needs met before they can accomplish learning academic subjects (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017).

Flexible funding provided the funds for wraparound services. Federal, local, state, and private agencies collaborated in gathering the funds to meet the needs of high-risk youth. This was through grants, private donations, or pro bono work from medical facilities (Fries, Carney, Blackman-Urteaga, Savas, 2012).

The method for utilizing wraparound services in most schools was to address and problem-solve for the immediate crisis, then work towards long-term goals. There was usually a wraparound facilitator that acted as a coach and helped the student locate the appropriate supports to address his/her needs. There were two types of supporters that work together to form a child and family team. Natural supports were friends, families, neighbors, and mentors. Paid supports were caseworkers, probation offices, teachers, and other professionals (Fries, Carney, Blackman-Urteaga, Savas, 2012).

Communities in Schools was one of the oldest and largest providers of student supports. This organization worked with over 2,300 schools in 25 states. Communities in Schools located, trained, and placed site coordinators in schools. These schools were typically high-poverty and low-performing. The site coordinator worked full time at schools and connected students with community resources. These resources included medical care, dental care, mental health services, food, housing, academic enrichment, tutoring, and mentoring. Communities in School calculated the cost to be approximately \$200 per student per school year. Funding came from 60 percent public funds through school districts and federal funding. The other 40 percent was derived from fundraising and private donations (McShane, 2019).

Mental health as a wraparound service. Mental health was an incredibly important issue, with up to 20 percent of children and youth experiencing a mental health disorder. Shockingly only 20 percent of affected students received support (Bartlett & Freeze, 2018).

A study by Barlett and Freeze identified schools as having the potential to be a key place to offer mental health services (Bartlett & Freeze, 2018). They identified numerous reasons that schools are uniquely situated to provide mental health support. First, there were fewer stigmas associated with receiving support at the school. Students did not have to go to a mental health professional; rather, the mental health support took place at school, which lessened the anxiety for both students and parents related to mental health support. Additionally, services at school decreased the expense associated with mental health support for families.

Also, due to the daily contact with students, teachers were trained to identify early signs of potential mental health challenges. Once identified, teachers and school staff collaborated to provide the student with the appropriate school-based support because many schools have built-in professionals such as school psychologists and counselors. If the mental health challenge was

beyond the expertise of the school level personnel, they connected the family with the appropriate community resources (Bartlett & Freeze, 2018).

A recent poll conducted by Kappan magazine surveyed Americans' attitudes towards public education. Of the Americans surveyed, 76 percent supported mental health screenings for all students. Instead of funding for armed guards in school, those surveyed overwhelmingly supported providing mental health services for students (Bartlett & Freeze, 2018).

Positive discipline through restorative justice. Another aspect of the whole-child approach to education, which was a cornerstone of community-based education is the disciplinary approach used at schools. Positive discipline practices were essential for whole-child education. One positive discipline practice was restorative justice.

Restorative Justice had its roots in the criminal justice system (Zehr, 2003). However, the ideas behind restorative justice expanded to be applicable beyond the criminal justice system, such as in the fields of education and business.

The Centre for Justice and Reconciliation listed the foundational principles of restorative justice as

1. Crime causes harm, and justice should focus on repairing that harm.
2. The people most affected by the crime should be able to participate in its resolution.
3. The responsibility of the government is to maintain order and of the community to build peace. (2019)

In addition to these foundational principles, restorative justice focused on various values. The first value was a peaceful social life. This did not mean that the community is free from conflict, but rather the resolution of conflicts allowed the society to return to peace following the conflict. Society accomplished this with a resolution of problems and protection of the society in

mind. The next value of restorative justice was respect through the inclusion and empowerment of community members. The third value was solidarity, which meant that members of the community were supportive and connected through the justice process. The final value was active responsibility in which the person was held responsible by themselves—not by others (Centre for Justice and Reconciliation, 2019).

Restorative justice could be applied to a classroom because using restorative justice practices was a constructive way to resolve disciplinary actions (We Are Teachers, 2019). Instead of discipline being merely punitive, offenders and victims engaged in collaboratively solving their differences in order to bring peace back to the community—or in this case, the classroom. Restorative justice in a classroom was based on respect, responsibility, relationship-building, and relationship-repairing. There were three tiers of restorative justice in schools: I) prevention, II) intervention, III) reintegration (We Are Teachers, 2019).

A school-wide approach to restorative justice was successful in community schools (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017). The first tier of prevention dealt with relationships and community building. This could be accomplished by creating a classroom agreement with the students. Then the students and the teacher held each other accountable for complying with the agreement. Tier II occurred when someone broke a rule of the agreement or harmed someone else. In intervention, the teacher acted as a mediator between the offender and the victim to get to the root of the problem and come up with solutions. Tier III was reintegration. With more serious offenses, this was applied to students coming back from suspension or expulsion (We Are Teachers, 2019). However, it could also be applied to smaller offenses by making sure that the offending student was reintegrated back into the classroom community without being alienated and labeled as the “bad kid.”

Build on community strengths to ensure conditions for learning. Schools with positive culture utilized all stakeholders. Stakeholders like students, parents, teachers, and community members, worked together to improve school culture. Stakeholders often told of the good things happening at a positive school, which then led to more positive outcomes (Peterson & Deal, 1998). In the era of social media, this could be a vital tool in changing the reputation of a school. Too often, the terrible events were what made the news, but schools with positive school culture publicized the important positive events that occurred at the school (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Commit to interdependence and shared accountability. The education of students did not happen only within the school walls and from the hours of 8 to 4. Education was a lifelong endeavor and was a crucial part in maximizing student development. Helping students to develop as productive members of society could not solely happen within the school; it was a process that required involvement from the family and community of the students (Crea, Renoylds, & Degnan, 2015).

When these systems were functioning successfully with proper communication channels and involvement from all parties, it gave the student the best possible chance for success. However, when one piece of the puzzle, such as family, was not functioning properly or fulfilling their responsibilities, it created a less than optimal outcome. Through learning how each of the aspects functioned, educators, family members, and community organizations could work together to ensure that the needs of each student were met.

Community Schools Structure and Function

Collaborative leadership. Educational leaders were often the most influential people in the building; however, it was important when asking others to perform above and beyond, that

the educational leader be willing to take chances. This type of *leadership by example* created respect from subordinates for the educational leader. Once all parties established mutual respect, it was much easier for the educational leader to make necessary changes to the school or district.

Another consistent element of schools with positive culture was leadership. Leadership abounded at all levels in a positive school. Good leadership started with principals. Principals articulated key values. Teachers reinforced them in their classes as well as behaviors and actions. Parents helped by visiting the school, participating in school organizations, and sharing good news with others. (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

Influential leaders used words, and most importantly, actions, to show the values and beliefs that the school cherishes. This, in turn, established the culture of the school. These leaders were a living, breathing representation of the culture of the school, and others emulate their words and actions, whether they are positive or negative.

Teacher leaders were also an important element of positive school culture. Teacher leader systems were formal or informal. Teacher leaders served as examples of excellent classroom instruction and facilitated collaboration among peers. Schools with teacher leaders placed a great emphasis on collaboration and creating a sense of the school as a shared community. This contributed to a shared vision for the school because teachers and others were a part of the decision-making process rather than administrators dictating what occurs in the school (Cansoy & Parlar, 2017).

Although school culture was a critical element in school success, schools were often left with toxic cultures where situations seemed bleak and impossible. However, through leadership, especially teacher leadership, school culture changed for the better. When broken windows were tended to and high expectations were set and demanded of all, including students, teachers,

administration, and parents, “bad” schools transformed to schools with positive school cultures that had positive outcomes, such as higher achievement, lower disciplinary infractions, and higher attendance (Peterson & Deal, 1998).

In addition to the burden of school-community partnerships falling on principals, much of the responsibility of creating a positive school culture was the result of principals’ actions. One way for principals to help students living in poverty was by developing cultures of hope. The idea of learned hopelessness was common in those living in poverty. Both principals and community organizations worked together to build an atmosphere of hope, which helps students strive for seemingly impossible goals (Sheehan and Rall, 2011).

Planning. A successful community school “incorporates the assets and needs of school, family, and community in the School Improvement Plan” (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2018, p. 6). This also included creating and fostering a shared vision of success for the school and community.

An aspect of transformational leadership that went hand in hand with creating a shared vision and set of shared beliefs was challenging and changing the status quo. Educational leaders who follow the practices of transformational leadership were not satisfied with anything less than excellent. If excellence is not being achieved, then there was room for change. Change was difficult for most people; however, if the current systems are not functioning and creating the best educational environment for students, change needed to occur. Educational leaders were willing to change and implement new procedures to better serve students. By adhering to some of the facets of transformational leadership, the process of change went more smoothly.

The first step, as previously mentioned, was to create shared purpose and values among members (Guiney, 2014). Once teachers, parents, students, administrators, and the community

believed in the same vision for the future, change became more readily accepted. After this was accomplished, students, teachers, parents, the community, and other administrators, were more willing to focus on collaborating to achieve a project that is meaningful to them (Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2016). By combining the elements of transformational leadership along with the clear communication and collaboration from democratic leadership, the educational leader and school developed original ideas that led to necessary change and improvements (Aydin, Sarier and Usyal, 2013). Teachers, students, parents, the community, and administration felt more comfortable in an environment influenced by the ideas of transformational and democratic leadership; they were willing to share ideas for change to make the school function more successfully. When working towards a shared goal, which was to the benefit of all involved, change was viewed as less scary and became a necessary step toward the end goal.

Another element of transformational leadership was that educational leaders demonstrated high values and beliefs. By using the model of transformational leadership, this leader achieved lofty goals by transforming the values of team members and encouraging them to do more than previously thought possible (Pierro et al, 2013). In addition to modeling integrity and other values, the educational leader influenced others to perform at and be their personal best—and more. After the vision had been introduced and change had been implemented, members wanted to achieve these goals for the benefit of the school.

Through the skills of transformational leadership, members of schools were willing to strive to accomplish the vision for the future in part because they felt that they are a valued part of the vision. Educational leaders using transformational leadership viewed teachers as artisans rather than simple laborers (Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2016). This distinction made teachers more willing to change practices and strive for excellence in their profession. The educational

leader recognized and rewarded individual accomplishments. Although the focus remained on the students, teachers who felt appreciated had higher job satisfaction and were more committed to the cause. The leader needed to maintain fairness while doing this because employees had to see the leader acting fairly and consistently—regardless of personal connections to employees (Griff, 2013). The educational leader accomplished this by setting guidelines for recognition and ensuring that administrators acknowledged every teacher regularly.

Coordinating infrastructures. Community schools were successful because they utilized and expanded on existing resources in the community (National Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017). Many community schools and districts employed a full-time site coordinator as part of the school-level administration (Jacobson, Villarreal, Muñoz, & Mahaffey, 2018). There needed to be coordination of current school and community resources as well as finding new community partnerships that might meet the need of students (National Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017). Whether there was a full-dedicated community school coordinator or it was another member of school staff, there needed to be an effort on the part of the school to build relationships based on trust with all stakeholders, including the community partnerships (Jacobson, Villarreal, Muñoz, & Mahaffey, 2018).

Student-centered data and practices. Another important aspect of the community school approach was that ensuring student success was an utmost priority. This began by involving students and families in determining lacking necessities students needed to successfully complete school and be prepared for life after graduation (The Center for Popular Democracy, Coalition for Community Schools, & Southern Education Foundation, 2016). It was also imperative that there was a data system with access to student information and the ability to track data. There also need to be written policy and procedures to ensure student and family

confidentiality. The school considered these when deciding what data was appropriate to share with community partners (Institution for Educational Leadership, 2018).

There were various student-centered instructional strategies to address individual learning styles that could be present within a classroom. One instructional strategy was *concrete-sequential*. Students that learned by this method preferred that information was presented in a sequential, linear, structured order. They thrived on hands-on activities with teacher-centered instruction. Ways to connect with this learner were to provide step-by-step instructions, utilize teaching modeling, and give detailed explanations of assignments. Another type of instructional strategy was the *abstract random*. This type preferred small group interaction with multiple sources of information. Student-centered discussions were a way for this learner to show mastery of content. The next type of instructional strategy was the *abstract sequential*. This learner enjoyed ideas in sequence using lists and logic. One method to meet the needs of this learner was to integrate course readings into other assignments. The final instructional strategy was *concrete-random*. This strategy preferred that ideas be presented using movement and experimentation. This type of learner enjoyed role-play, simulations, experiments, and student presentations (Sekulick, 2018).

Powerful learning. The idea of powerful and meaningful learning was not unique to community schools; however, it was critical to the community school. In terms of curricula, community schools sought to make sure that learning reflected the interest of students (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2018). This was achieved through the use of culturally appropriate curricula (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017). Also, there was a focus on problem-solving that directly impacted their community (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2018).

Utilizing community connections allowed students to experience internships and apprenticeships with local businesses and organizations (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017).

Educational researcher Melissa Seaver conducted a study that showed student choice equaling student engagement. Engaged students invested in their learning. Students who were engaged in their learning were not only motivated by formal indicators like grades but also were concerned about understanding the material in order to apply it to their own lives. This was accomplished through the use of student-centered classrooms. Student-centered classrooms personalized curriculum because students were given choices in their learning process (Seaver, 2019).

Bradford, Mowder, and Bohte (2016) conducted an analysis of various student-centered teaching strategies. The first method was the flipped classroom. In this method, students completed pre-assigned homework outside of the class and then went over the homework or notes in class with the teacher and completed practice problems. The next method was team-based learning. This was group work, or collaborative learning; however, the teacher divided the tasks to share the work more evenly. The final method analyzed in this study was incentive-based learning. This strategy utilized positive reinforcements to motivate students. This was achieved by using tests as incentive beyond grades because it is a high stakes incentive (2016).

This study found that these student-centered teaching techniques had a positive impact on student learning outcomes (Bradford, Mowder, and Bohte, 2016). The study also found that there were two perspectives on engagement. The first was emotional engagement. Emotional engagement was seen to increase when students felt this class or information would help their future. Emotional engagement was also increased if they felt they were a good student in that class or if the incentives motivated them. The second type of engagement was active

engagement. Active engagement increased when students came to class prepared. However, it did find that students had less active engagement when working in small groups (Bradford, Mowder, and Bohte, 2016).

Beyond instructional hours, community schools endeavored to expand learning opportunities. This could be accomplished before and after school, as well as during the summer or other breaks during the school year. Additionally, the school supported students during the school day through wraparound services, academic intervention, and tutoring (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2018). This high-quality support included services to English language learning students, as well as students receiving Special Education and other intervention services (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017). There was also an emphasis on providing support during transitional years, such as elementary to middle schools, middle school to high school, and high school to college and career (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2018).

Authentic family engagement. While many knew the term family engagement, some in education struggled to define it. *Preparing Educators to Engage Families* defined family engagement as “the beliefs, attitudes, and activities of families to support their children’s learning, whether at home, at school, or in the community” (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider, & Chatman-Nelson, 2014, p.xviii). All of these components working together showed that family engagement was a multidimensional process.

The first dimension was the notion of shared responsibility (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider, & Chatman-Nelson, 2014). For family engagement to be effective, all parties involved needed to acknowledge that they were working together in the best interest of the child. This included the school, the family, the student, and the community. Family engagement was most beneficial

when it was co-constructed. Co-construction meant that schools, community, parents, and other stakeholders each knew their role and value when it came to education and relied on each other to fulfill their part (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider, & Chatman-Nelson, 2014). Roles for the school or educational entity included the following: developing and editing family engagement plans, using community organizations and businesses to support family engagement, and many other responsibilities (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider, & Chatman-Nelson, 2014). Roles of a family included the following: establishing a consistent routine for homework, having high expectations for academic performance, and communicating with teachers (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider, & Chatman-Nelson, 2014).

The second dimension of the family was continuity. Family engagement was not only important in elementary education; it also extended to secondary education and beyond. In early grades, parents supported literacy and encouraged strong social skills. Continuity was especially needed in periods of transitions like entering kindergarten, transitioning to middle school, and starting high school (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider, & Chatman-Nelson, 2014). Often, these transitions coincided with biological changes that can impact students. Additionally, there could be family changes that compounded the challenges of transition years (Coombes, Allen, & McCall, 2014). Since these times of great change were challenging for students, it was important for families, schools, and community organizations have to work together to provide as smooth a transition period as possible.

The final dimension of family engagement was that it occurs across contexts, both in the school and home, as well as in after school and community-based care centers (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider, & Chatman-Nelson, 2014). A child was part of many sociological institutions, such as school, daycare, churches, after school care, and many more. It was important to emphasize the

importance of all of these institutions working together to provide the best possible support for the child.

Family engagement was an important aspect of the academic success of a child. Research showed a link between family engagement in the school and the academic attainment of the student (Coombes, Allen, & McCall, 2014). This then led to increased academic success for the students and increased involvement from parents. The link between the school and outside of the school helped to create the best possible environment for students.

In addition to academics, family engagement in education was a vital component of the mental health of children. Studies have shown that parental behaviors connected with depression during adolescence (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Studies have also shown that increased emotional skills positively impacted the education of students (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). In a recent study by Wang and Sheikh-Khalil, research found that students were motivated more when parents and children engaged in discussions about school and future plans (2014). This type of parental engagement positively impacted academic success and decreased the likelihood that their child would become depressed.

Although family engagement was important throughout the student's educational journey, it often decreased in significance with age. However, adolescence was still a critical time for students. Adolescents were more likely to decrease their attention to school and experiment with substances and delinquency (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Family support and engagement were critical to ensuring a successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. Studies showed that disengaged students were more likely to drop out and suffer negative psycho-emotional consequences (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Adolescence was a period in a

student's life that needs to be navigated carefully, and the many aspects of family engagement in education could help with that.

Children living with someone other than their biological parents were especially at risk for low family engagement and the negative consequences associated with it. Studies showed that these children “are at risk of a range of unfavorable educational outcomes, such as grade repetition, missing school, suspension and expulsion, low grades, non-completion...and generally not faring well at school” (Tilbury, Creed, Buys, Osmond, & Crawford, 2012, p. 455). These negative consequences would be eased with the proper level of engagement from other parties in the child's life.

Authentic community engagement. Adult engagement was not limited to parents of students; in fact, it encompassed the broader community. The community school effectively joined and made use of the community and neighborhood resources (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2018, p. 17). This could be accomplished by utilizing the school as a central hub for the community. The school could house adult education courses as well as GED preparation courses—as needed in the community. Additionally, having the school staff visible in the community increased community engagement. Other forms of community engagement were hosting community events and discussions at the school (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2017). Also, it was important for the school building to be open and available to the community. It needed to be available at no cost to host community events, as long as the facilities were adequately maintained (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2018).

Four Pillars of Community Schools

There were many models of community school education (Min, Anderson, & Chen, 2017). Regardless of their official model title or source of funding, Oakes, Maier & Daniel

(2017) found that there were four pillars consistent across all models of community-based education. They argued that these pillars aligned with evidence-based practices of effective pedagogy (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). These features were shown to help students achieve their potential academically, socially, and emotionally (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017).

The first pillar was integrated student supports. Student supports, especially in wraparound services, were critical for students' ability to learn (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the lower-levels of needs such as physiological, safety, love/affection/belonging, and needs for esteem needed to be met for students to reach self-actualization (Tichy, 2017). Wraparound services were critical in meeting the lower-level needs of students for them to progress up the hierarchy to reach their full potential academically (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017).

The next pillar was expanded learning time and opportunities. Community schools accomplished this in a variety of ways. This included before and after school tutoring as well as enrichment and remediation during breaks. Schools also utilized community partnerships to provide students with academic instruction, mentoring, and music, arts, and athletic opportunities. Additionally, community schools provided service-learning opportunities for students to give back to their community (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017).

The third pillar of community schools was family and community engagement. Oakes, Maier, & Daniel found that there was a positive relationship between strong family engagement and increased attendance and academic gains (2017). The study pointed to increased community and family engagement as a positive factor.

The final pillar of community schools was collaborative leadership and practices. Although the principal might be the head of the school, he/she needed to recognize the need for

collaboration to meet the needs of all students. Collaborative leadership focused on taking into account the voices of all stakeholders in decision-making. Creating a leadership team comprised of stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, and community members was a successful method to ensure all stakeholders had a voice in issues concerning the school, which affected the broader community (Oakes, Maier, & Daniel, 2017). The essence of a community school was that it was larger than one leader; the long-term partnerships should last beyond the tenure of any one leader (Jacobson, Villarreal, Muñoz, & Mahaffey, 2018).

Conclusion

Community schools were more than merely an educational fad. Community schools originated as far back as the start of public education in the United States. The student-centered approach of community schools proved effective in utilizing community partnerships to meet the needs of students and decrease the achievement gap—especially in underprivileged students and students of color. Community schools were based in the community they served and needed to reflect the needs, goals, and aspirations of the community for their future.

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

The idea of community schools existed in the United States public education system for nearly a century (Stack, 2016). However, the concepts of community-based education applied to schools that were not traditionally considered community schools. Consolidated high schools could still be considered community schools in the types of services, such as wraparound services, community/family engagement, and student-centered learning, they provided for students and their families both at school and outside of the traditional school setting.

Research Question

How does community-based education affect school culture according to teachers' perceptions?

Description of the Research Approach

The researcher conducted this study through the lens of qualitative research. Qualitative methods “describe a process or experience” intending to make “meaning of experiences or phenomena by following data as they emerge” (Cruz & Tantia, 2017, p. 81). Qualitative research emphasized on the how and why of phenomena (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Unlike experiments associated with quantitative research, the researcher selected participants because of the experience that they had with the topic (Cruz & Tantia, 2017).

This study utilized phenomenological research. Phenomenological research centered on shared experience and gained insights from participants that had experience with the researched material. Through interviews and other techniques regarding the participants' experiences, the researcher analyzed and developed a “description of the participants' meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience” (Yates & Leggett, 2016, p. 229).

To maintain anonymity and secure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used to reference the school district and the two high schools

Research design. The first step of this study was to obtain the required approvals from Carson-Newman University's Institutional Review Board and the school system's director of schools. Once this was obtained, the researcher contacted the Christiana County (pseudonym) Director of Schools to receive approval to use participants from the district. Approval from Carson-Newman and Christiana Schools allowed the researcher to begin the data collection process.

The researcher emailed potential participants the voluntary survey. Participants completed the survey via Google Forms, and Google Forms automatically transferred the information into Google Sheets (similar to Microsoft Excel). Participants included their job title (teacher, administrator, or counselor), number of years in that position, and number of years at the school. Participants then answered questions about their school using a five-point Likert Scale of "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" (see Appendix A). The final question is if they were interested in continued participating in this study. If they selected *yes*, they had a place to include their email address for future contact. If they selected *no*, they submitted their answers without giving any personal information.

The researcher selected participants for interviews from the survey participants that wished to continue participating in the study. Selection criteria included an interest in continued participation, years of experience, subject area, and job title. The researcher selected diverse participants to have a variety of opinions. The researcher scheduled individual, in-person interviews with three teachers at each school. Masingo (pseudonym) School had a total of three interviews; however, Redhill (pseudonym) High School had two interviews due to one

participant's inability to participate. The researcher asked a series of the same questions in each interview (see *Appendix B*). The researcher developed the questions for the interview based on the responses from the survey. The questions explored the themes in the initial survey more deeply and allowed for the participants to give extended explanations and support their answers. However, there was room for additional information based on the participant's area of expertise and personal connection with the topic.

The researcher conducted interviews in person and over the phone, whichever was more convenient for the participants. Each interview lasted 5-15 minutes. The researcher recorded the interviews and had them transcribed via an online system.

Following the interviews, the researcher hosted a focus group at each school. The focus group answered a variety of questions that further explored the topics of school culture and community-based education (see *Appendix C*). The focus groups were comprised of interview participants from each school. The groups met for 30-45 minutes. Participants were able to use others' responses and modify their answers after hearing others' answers.

Data collection. This study utilized a survey of participants that had experience working directly with high school students in the two schools. The researcher sent surveys to potential participants via emails. The researcher used Google Forms to compile the responses. The survey was a five-point Likert Scale evaluating the various attributes of community schools (see *Appendix A*). At the end of the survey, there was an option for participants to continue in the study by providing their email.

The researcher selected participants for interviews from survey participants that were willing to continue in the research process. There were originally three teachers from each school; however, one participant from Redhill withdrew from the study prior to the interview and

focus group. Interviews followed a scripted set of questions (see Appendix B). Individual interviews ranged from 30 minutes to an hour. The researcher recorded and transcribed the interviews, as agreed upon in the Informed Consent Form.

Following the interviews, the researcher gathered a focus group from each school of interview participants. The guiding questions for the focus group were developed from the information gleaned from the interview responses (see Appendix C). Participation in the focus group served as a final opportunity for participants to review the data from the survey and interviews. Participants added any additional comments that the data did not address and have a time of discussion for the implications of this study.

Coding process. A critical way that quantitative research differed from qualitative research was that in qualitative research the data analysis process happened as the data was being collected (Yates & Leggett, 2016). The researcher used open coding as the coding system for this study. The researcher began by reading through the data and dividing the data into similar themes. There were two co-coders that read and listened to the surveys, interviews, and focus group responses to assist the researcher in coding.

The first level of coding consisted of reading through the data and summarizing the responses. This level was low inference and consisted of assigning codes to blocks of text or answers to surveys and interviews. In the second level of coding, the researcher looked for patterns of first-level coding to group codes into meaningful inferences. Following second-level coding, the researcher combined similar themes into broader themes that served as the level headings for chapter four. The researcher used third-level coding to determine patterns to form conclusions about the data.

Data analysis. After the researcher coded the data from the survey and interviews, the researcher scheduled a time for a focus group at each of the schools. The focus group consisted of the same three interview participants. The focus group analyzed decoded data from the study, discussed the meaning of the survey results and interview responses, and added opinions. Each focus group analyzed the information from their sister high school and considered some of the potential causes for the differences between the two schools.

Description of the Study Participants and Settings

This study sought to determine what elements of community-based education local high schools used to meet the needs of today's students. This study concentrated on the perceptions of teachers regarding the aspects of community-based education that existed, or do not exist, in their schools. To get a complete look at the variance in high schools, this study took place in one school district in rural East Tennessee.

The Christiana School District had two high schools: a traditional community school, Masingo School, and a larger high school, Redhill High School, that had students from various communities across the county. According to the Tennessee Department of Education 2018 Report Card, Christiana had nine schools and an enrollment of 4670 students in Kindergarten through 12th grade. District-wide, White students comprised 83.4 percent of the population, Hispanic and Latinx students at 12.1 percent, and Black students at 3.1 percent. Asian and Native American students comprised less than 1.5 percent of the students in Christiana. The per-pupil expenditure of Christiana was \$9,714.49, which was less than the state average of \$10,340.26. Nearly 12 percent of students in Christiana Schools had an identified disability, and 20.3 percent qualified as economically disadvantaged (TN Department of Education, 2019).

Students had the choice to attend any high school in Christiana as long as they lived or owned property in Christiana County.

Masingo School was a traditional community school serving a community in southeast Christiana. Masingo School was founded in 1932 and was a PreK through 12th-grade school housed in a single building. The student enrollment for 2018 was 663 students in Kindergarten through 12th grade (TN Department of Education, 2019). At Masingo, there was less diversity than in other parts of Christiana County. The percentage of White students was 94.7 percent in 2018. The approximate number of students in the high school alone was 220. There were three administrators, three counselors, and 42 classroom teachers. Of the 42 total teachers, 15 had direct instructional contact with high school students.

Redhill High School was the larger high school in serving students in Christiana County. Redhill High School opened in its current location in 1967 and served students of four smaller communities within Christiana County. RHS had an enrollment of 741 students in grades 9 through 12. Redhill's student population was considerably more diverse than Masingo's. Hispanic and Latinx students comprised 15.9 percent of the population, and 79.5 percent of students were White. There were 49 classroom teachers, two counselors, and three administrators (TN Department of Education, 2019). All of these positions had direct contact with high school students.

This study's participants were high school teachers, counselors, and administrators. The study was a comparison of two high schools, Masingo and Redhill, in one county. While only one was considered a traditional community school, research indicated that any school could be a community school (The Center for Popular Democracy, Coalition for Community Schools, &

Southern Education Foundation, 2016). This study analyzed the different aspects of community schools in two high schools in one county.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

The limitations of the study accounted for potential weaknesses in the study, which were beyond the researcher's scope of control. One of the more prevalent limitations of this study was the limited number of schools that were considered community schools. Although any school could be a community school, many schools did not operate according to the principles of community-based education. This study focused on schools that met the qualifications of providing a community-based education.

Another limitation was the limited time frame available to complete the research. Ideally, this study could be completed over several years to see how the schools developed in competency regarding community-based education. However, due to the time constraints, the study was completed at one time as opposed to longitudinally.

Delimitations referred to constraints to a study that the researcher intentionally set. This study was limited to two high schools in East Tennessee. The delimitations of the number of schools and geographic area were due to the researcher's location and the time frame of the study. The delimitation of only including high schools in the study was due to the researcher's focus on those grade levels.

Assumptions were beliefs that were held true across scholarly research. This study contained a critical assumption that participants would provide truthful and honest answers to the surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Trustworthiness Techniques

The researcher utilized various techniques in this study to maintain the trustworthiness of the research procedures. Triangulation occurred by giving participants multiple chances to give opinions since the same participants participated in the survey, interviews, and focus groups. Also, member checks occurred to ensure that the researcher's biases were mitigated because participants verified their statements. Peer debriefing occurred with colleagues to assure that the conclusions reached were based on data. An audit trail occurred, and the researcher kept data and pertinent paperwork related to the study.

Ethical Considerations

No known risk was posed in this study, as participants were voluntary. Participants could skip any questions in the survey or interview. Participation was entirely voluntary. To protect participant anonymity, identifiers were not mandatory; however, people who wanted to continue participating in the interviews or focus groups provided an email. Additionally, this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Carson-Newman University and the Director of Schools of Christiana County.

Summary

The methodology for the research in this study began with the research question of "How does community-based education affect school culture according to teachers' perceptions?" After obtaining appropriate approval from Carson-Newman University's Institutional Review Board and Christiana School District, high school teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors in the school district were sent an email with a link to a survey. The survey consisted of a five-point Likert Scale of questions pertaining to their school's culture in terms of community-based education. Participants had the option to continue participating in the study

after the completion of the survey. The researcher scheduled interviews with participants selected by the researcher from the pool of potential subjects. Then the members from each school that participated in the interviews were in a focus group. They discussed the data collected from the interviews and surveys and were able to listen to other participants' ideas and provide feedback based on others' opinions.

CHAPTER FOUR: Presentation of Findings

Community-based education and school culture were topics that were often discussed in the field of educational research; however, there was little existing research on how the two concepts connect. Elements of school culture, such as close relationships among students, staff, and administration and effectively communicating high expectations for all (Deal & Peterson, 1990; Redding & Corbett, 2018), were found through schools that use community-based education. Research indicated that any school could be a community school (The Center for Popular Democracy, Coalition for Community Schools, & Southern Education Foundation, 2016). To further the connectedness or lack of connection between the concepts of school culture and community-based education, the researcher conducted a qualitative study with two schools in the same county.

The researcher conducted this study through the lens of qualitative research. Qualitative methods “describe a process or experience” intending to make “meaning of experiences or phenomena by following data as they emerge” (Cruz & Tantia, 2017, p. 81). Qualitative research emphasized on the how and why of phenomena (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Unlike experiments associated with quantitative studies, the researcher selected participants based on their experience (Cruz & Tantia, 2017).

Descriptive Characteristics of Participants

The researcher analyzed participants from two high schools in the same county and school district, Christiana (pseudonym) County. Although the high schools were in the same county, their demographics and size varied greatly. Masingo (pseudonym) School, a traditional community school, and Redhill (pseudonym) High School, a larger school comprised of students from communities across the county.

According to the Tennessee state data (TN Department of Education, 2019), Christiana had nine schools with an enrollment of 4670 students in Kindergarten through 12th-grade. District-wide, White students comprised 83.4 percent of the population, Hispanic and Latinx students at 12.1 percent, and Black students at 3.1 percent. Asian and Native American students comprised less than 1.5 percent of the students in Christiana (see Table 4.1). The per-pupil expenditure of Christiana was \$9,714.49, which was less than the state average of \$10,340.26 (see Table 4.2). Nearly 12 percent of students in Christiana Schools had an identified disability, and 20.3 percent qualified as economically disadvantaged (TN Department of Education, 2019) (see Table 4.3). Students had the choice to attend any high school in Christiana as long as they lived or owned property in Christiana County.

Table 4.1

Racial demographics of Christiana County students

	Percent of student population
White	83.4
Black	3.1
Hispanic / Latinx	12.1
Asian and Native Americans	1.5

Table 4.2*Per pupil expenditure of Christiana County vs. Tennessee state average*

	Per pupil expenditure
Christiana County	\$9,714.49
State average	\$10,340.26
Difference	-625.77

Table 4.3*Notable student subgroups of Christiana County*

	Percent of student population
Special education	11.9
Economically disadvantaged	20.3

Masingo School was a traditional community school serving a community in southeast Christiana. The student enrollment for 2018 was 663 students in Kindergarten through 12th grade (TN Department of Education, 2019). The percentage of White students was 94.7 percent in 2018. The approximate number of students in the high school alone was 220. There were three administrators, three counselors, and 42 classroom teachers. Of the 42 total teachers, 24 had direct instructional contact with high school students.

Redhill High School was the larger high school in serving students in Christiana County. RHS had an enrollment of 741 students in grades 9 through 12. Redhill's student population was considerably more diverse than Masingo's. Hispanic and Latinx students comprised 15.9 percent

of the population, and 79.5 percent of students were White. There were 49 classroom teachers, two counselors, and three administrators (TN Department of Education, 2019). All of these positions had direct contact with high school students (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

Comparison of demographics of Masingo School and Redhill High School

	Student enrollment	Number of teachers	Percentage of white students	Percentage of Latinx students
Masingo School	663 (PreK-12) 220 (HS only)	42 (PreK-12) 24 (HS only)	94.7 %	N/A
Redhill High School	741	49	79.5 %	15.9 %

Redhill High School. A survey sent to all teachers, administrators, and counselors was the first component of the study. At Redhill High School, 55 potential respondents received the email, and 26 people responded, resulting in a response rate of 47.3 percent.

Out of the 26 respondents, the researcher selected three teachers to continue participating in the study. One of the teachers withdrew as a participant leaving two teachers to participate in the interview and focus group portion of the study (see Table 4.5).

At the time of the study, Sandy Outler had a bachelor’s degree and 32 years of experience. She taught music and theater at Redhill. Outler also had experience teaching elementary music; however, she had been at Redhill for nearly ten years.

Nicki Wilde was the other participant at Redhill and had a master’s degree and 20 years of experience, mostly as Special Education teacher. Wilde had been the teacher for English Language Learners for five years.

Table 4.5

Participants at Redhill High School

	Subject area	Years of experience	Years at Redhill High School	Highest degree obtained
Sandy Outler	Music and theater	32	10	Bachelor’s
Nicki Wilde	English language learners education	20	5	Master’s

Masingo School. The researcher sent a survey to 29 teachers, administrators, and counselors that worked directly with high school students because Masingo served students from elementary to high school. Of the 29 potential respondents, 21 people responded. That was a 72.4 percent response rate on the survey. From the survey participants that offered to continue participation, the researcher selected three teachers to participate in the interview and focus group (see *Table 6*).

Jessica Wonderly had earned her Educational Specialist degree and had been teaching English for 13 years, 20 of which had been at Masingo School.

Robert Davidson had a bachelor’s degree, and this was his first year teaching chemistry and physics.

The third participant from Masingo was Melissa Farmer. Farmer had an Educational Special degree and had been the guidance teacher as well as the high school guidance counselor for 14 years. She was also an alumnus of Masingo School.

Table 4.6

Participants at Masingo School

	Subject area	Years of experience	Years at Masingo School	Highest degree obtained
Jessica Wonderly	English	13	12	EdS
Robert Davidson	Chemistry & Physics	1	1	Bachelor's
Melissa Farmer	Guidance	14	14	EdS

Data Presentation

The researcher focused on three data sources to triangulate the data and limit biases. The information was derived from a survey sent to all high school teachers, administration, and guidance counselors. Then participants from each school were selected to participate in individual interviews as well as a school-specific focus group. All of the data focused on answering the central research question of *How does community-based education affect school culture according to teachers' perceptions?*

Survey. The survey questions focused on school culture and community-based education. The researcher developed questions four through eleven based on the ideas published

by The Institute for Educational Leadership's *Community School Standards*. The researcher included the definition for trauma-informed practices to ensure all participants understood the concept.

For Redhill High School, the respondents answered 4.39 out of 5 that the school had an overall positive school culture. They also rated administration developing and valuing relationships and teachers and students developing relationships at above 4 (4.19 and 4.27, respectively). The participants rated the school's efforts to negate the negative impacts of socio-economic inequity at 3.85, racial inequity at 3.88, and cultural and linguistic inequity at 3.92. With regards to utilizing trauma-informed approaches, participants rated using trauma-informed approaches in discipline at 3.38 and curriculum development at 3.19. Participants rated the school's ability to provide access to social, medical, dental, and mental health services for students at 3.23 out of 5. They accessed the school using positive approaches during discipline as 3.35 out of 5. The final question about whether the school utilized community partnerships to benefit all students earned a score of 3.85 out of 5.

For Masingo School, the respondents scored 3.80 out of 5 that the school had an overall positive school culture. They also rated administration developing and valuing relationships at 3.38 and teachers and students developing relationships 4.48. The participants rated the school's efforts to negate the negative impacts of socio-economic inequity at 4.14, racial inequity at 3.86, and cultural and linguistic inequity at 3.86. With regards to utilizing trauma-informed approaches, participants rated using trauma-informed approaches in discipline at 3.29 and curriculum development at 2.86. Participants rated the school's ability to provide access to social, medical, dental, and mental health services for students at 3 out of 5. They accessed the school using positive approaches during discipline as 3.19 out of 5. The final question regarding

whether the school utilized community partnerships to benefit all students earned a score of 3.81 out of 5.

Interviews and focus groups. Six participants, three from each school, continued in the interview and focus groups. Although the schools are in the same county, the teacher-participants had different experiences in the application of community-based learning and school culture.

One of the most staggering differences in responses dealt with issues stemming from the overall size of the student body. Teachers at Masingo described a *sense of family* at their small school of approximately 220 students. Teachers expressed that they were able to have students in a class for multiple years and got to know the students' lives outside of schools. In addition, Masingo teachers commonly interacted and formed relationships with students that did not have in class. They spoke about going to games or programs to support students.

While teachers at Redhill also stated that they were able to have students for multiple classes over their high school career, it seemed to occur less frequently than at Masingo. Redhill had 521 more students than Masingo, which is almost triple the size. The sheer difference in the number of students meant that there were larger class sizes, which limited the individualized interaction with students. Also, teachers did not mention forming relationships with students outside of their classes.

While there was a considerable size difference between the two schools, teachers from both schools emphasized the importance of building relationships with students. While Redhill's administration actively encouraged this, teachers at Masingo expressed that teachers formed relationships without much practical support from administration. Teachers from both schools stated techniques like asking students questions about their lives outside of school and having

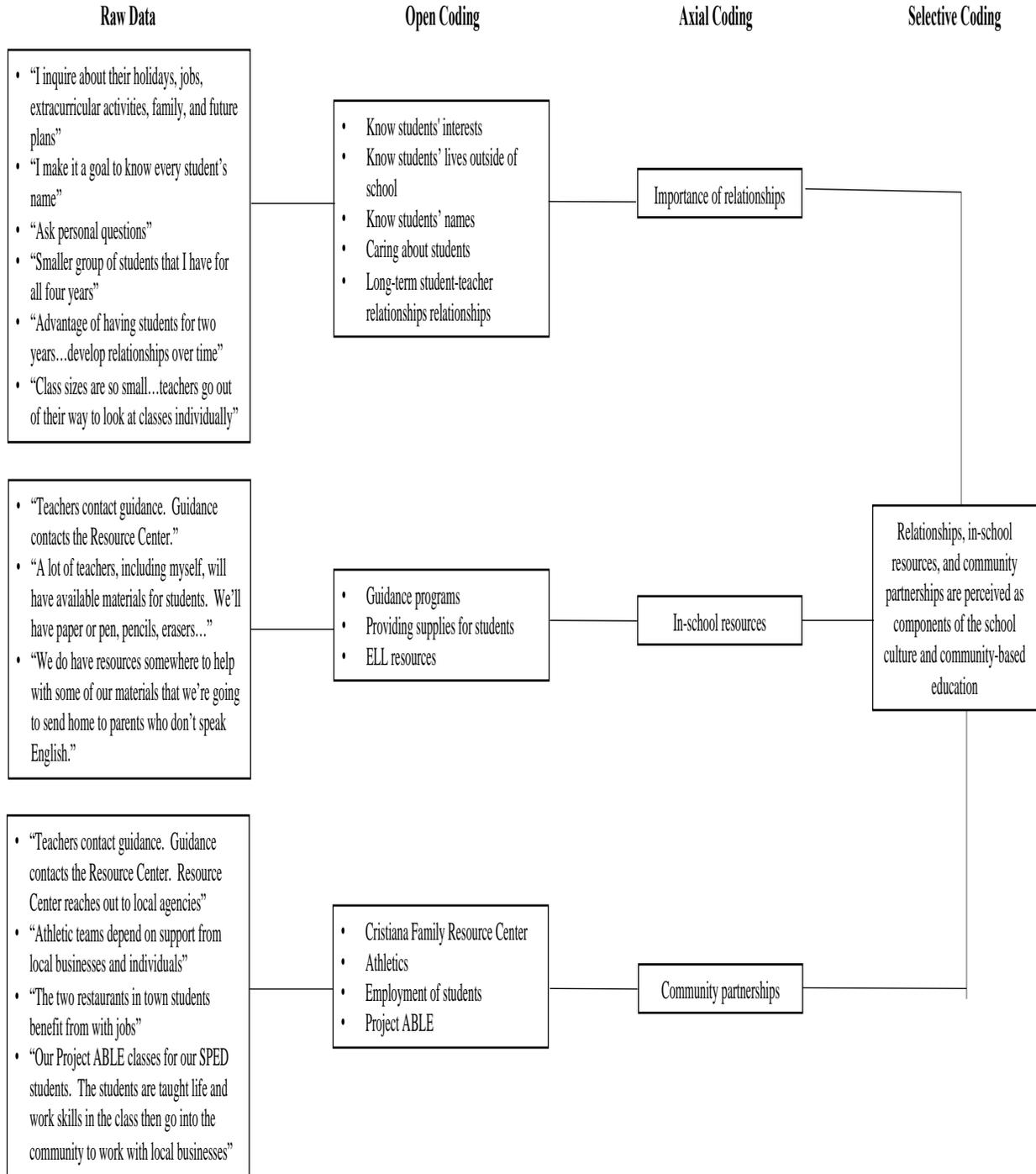
nonacademic conversations with students as methods to gain the trust of students and form strong relationships.

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed the transcripts from the interviews and the written notes from the focus groups to code the data. The researcher analyzed the raw data and grouped like themes through open coding. Then the researcher looked for similarities in statements to complete axial coding. The results from the axial coding process were further grouped through selective coding to determine the broadest themes of the data (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1

How does community-based education affect school culture according to teachers' perceptions?



The researcher utilized open coding through the coding program Nvivo. The Nvivo program allowed researchers to store and organize data. Nvivo also analyzed and categorized the data as well as created word cloud visuals.

Word clouds served as another visual representation of the coded data. Nivo analyzed the number of times participants used each word and increased the size of the word based on the frequency. The visual representation of the word clouds allowed readers to know the important the concepts were by the number of times participants said each word, which resulted in the words being a larger size.

The first level of coding was line-by-line coding. The researcher read through all the interviews and notes from focus groups and used the Nvivo program to give nodes to chunks of text. The researcher developed 79 separate nodes. In this phase, the researcher did not look for patterns. Following the line by line coding, the researcher utilized the world cloud feature in Nvivo to create a word cloud which showed the frequency of words in the data. The more times the word was mentioned, the larger the words appeared. The most commonly used words were *school, students, teachers, know, think, and community* (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.4

Higher-level coding word cloud frequency



Study Findings

After thoroughly reviewing the data gathered from the surveys, interviews, and focus groups, the researcher developed three central themes. The three themes were the importance of relationships, in-school resources, and community partnerships.

Importance of relationships. As discussed in the literature, one of the fundamental concepts behind positive school culture was the importance of relationships. Relationships were critical among all stakeholders of a school—from the highest-paid administration to the youngest students (Hollingworth, Olsen, Asikin-Garmager, Winn, 2018). These ideas were reflected in the data from the survey.

Participants from both schools stated that strong teacher-student relationships were evident at their school. Teachers from both schools mentioned that there was a “family feeling” at the schools. Wilde from Redhill High School mentioned in her interview about the mentoring

that occurred between veteran and newer teachers. The veteran teachers made newer teachers aware of the importance of building relationships with students to build a culture of trust (Wilde, personal communication, January 29, 2020).

One aspect that differed in how the teachers expressed building student-teacher relationships was the size of the student body as well as class sizes. Wonderly at Masingo School stated that Masingo had some of the best student-teacher relationships in part because of the small class sizes. Farmer also mentioned that due to the small size of the school, less than 700 students in PreK through 12th grade, and around 220 students in the high school, building relationships with students was easier. Teachers went out of their way to learn about each students' hobbies, family situation, and other interests. While students might "slip through the cracks" at a larger school, it was easier to get to know every student at Masingo due to the small class sizes.

Teachers at both schools explained how they build relationships with students. At both schools, teachers had the benefit of teaching students across multiple years. Teachers from both schools talked about asking students personal questions. Redhill teachers made sure to remember the information from conversations and use it later as a way for students to recognize that they matter and were worth remembering. A critical element of building relationships at Masingo was merely to know the students' names.

Much of the responsibility of creating a school with a culture of trusting relationships fell to the leader. Strong, trusting relationships encouraged faculty buy-in for changes that the leaders initiated. (Hollingworth, Olsen, Asikin-Garmager, Winn, 2018). These ideas were especially apparent at Redhill.

Teachers expressed how difficult last year was for them. They explained how there was a challenging situation between the administration and a student from a prominent family that was closely connected with the school system. The situation was prolonged for months and created a toxic environment. At the end of the school year, the county restructured the administration at Redhill, and both teachers explained how the culture of the school had improved. When asked to describe the school in one word, these teachers used *transforming* and *transitional*. Teachers went on to explain how the current administration was trying to correct the past wrongs and improve the school's morale and culture.

The manner in which the administration at Redhill was trying to improve school culture was by listening to teachers and students, especially regarding student discipline. The teachers mentioned how the administration was good at taking into consideration the student's home life and past behavior when handling behavioral issues. Redhill's administration also reached out to teachers to gain insight into students' lives and challenges instead of always utilizing a one-size-fits-all approach to discipline.

In contrast, teachers at Masingo School explained how the administration had "minimal impact of relationship building" (Masingo Focus Group, Personal Communication, February 24, 2020). Teachers described a disconnect and feeling of uneasiness among the teachers, students, and administration. These teachers mentioned that there was a lack of trust and open communication because teachers did not feel comfortable expressing their opinions to the administration. One teacher explained that the administration often asked for feedback; however, they did nothing with the information or gave an impression of "listening in order to respond instead of listening to understand" (Masingo Focus Group, Personal Communication, February 24, 2020).

In-school resources. Teachers at both schools knew that there were many resources available for students that need help—whether its medical, dental, mental health, social, or financial assistance. Both schools explained that the first step for getting help for a student was to contact the guidance department or school nurse. At Redhill, teachers mentioned that the guidance department made announcements, like information about the food bank or how to register for a coat from the coat drive, targeting students that needed assistance. The guidance department also posted fliers in both English and Spanish for helplines and other resources. However, most did not know how the process continued from there.

As part of the guidance department, Farmer (Masingo) explained the process in more detail. After a referral, guidance contacted the Christiana County Family Resource Center. The Center was a county-wide organization that made connections between community members and needy families. The Family Resource Center donated head lice kits, organized the Angel Tree to distribute Christmas gifts, and provided other resources.

In addition to the Family Resource Center, there are many in-school resources for students at both schools. Teachers from both schools mentioned how teachers often provided basic, essential school supplies for students. Teachers often purchased these supplies out of their pocket and allowed students to take them as needed.

At Redhill, there was a large percentage of English Language Learner (ELL) students. ELL students had many in-school resources available. First, teachers explained how information that was sent home via administration was written in both English and Spanish. Classroom teachers also received training on how to accommodate ELL students using readily available tools such as Google Translate. All of these tools, along with a strong ELL program, increased the access that ELL students have within Redhill School.

Community partnerships. Another central idea gleaned from the data was the importance of community partnerships. Although many teachers had difficulty describing specific community partnerships, once the idea was explained, they recognized the extent of community partnerships that existed at the school. Teachers at both schools explained that there was a sense of community pride among students and community members. Teachers at Masingo related this to the overall sense of *family* at the school and having generations of families attending the same school.

One way that community partnerships were visible at both schools was through the engagement of athletic sponsors. Looking around the football field, baseball field, or gymnasium of both schools, one could see many banners of different community businesses and individuals that showed their contribution to the sports team. Businesses and churches also donated pre-game meals for some sports teams. Community members also attended sporting events, which generated revenue for the sporting team. Teachers at Masingo noted that many of these community members attended without having student-athletes on the team. Some have been attending games for over 30 years without a child playing.

Another way that community partnerships were crucial at Masingo School was especially noted in the employment of students. Local businesses often called the school looking for student workers. Businesses were quick to hire students and work around their schedules with school and extracurricular activities.

The strong sense of community was also evident in the Project ABLE program with Special Education students at Masingo. This program taught severely special needs students life and work skills. Then students went into the community to work at local businesses. A local fast-food restaurant, grocery store, and farm were the businesses that partnered with student

workers. Many of these students had obtained jobs at these businesses following graduation from the program.

Another essential use of community partnerships was facilitated through the Christiana County Family Resource Center. After the school contacted the Family Resource Center with a student needing assistance, the Family Resource Center reached out to various local businesses and nonprofits to meet the students' needs. Teachers at Masingo described a student who was in desperate need of dental work. The student never smiled and appeared self-conscious of his rotting teeth. The guidance department reached out to the Family Resource Center that contacted a dentist who donated to give the student a set of veneers—all at no cost to the student.

Summary

This study focused on community-based education and school culture. Through a study of two schools in the same county, the researcher conducted a survey sent to all high school teachers, administration, and counselors. Then participants from each school were selected to continue participating in individual interviews and school-based focus groups.

The researcher coded the data from the surveys, interviews, and focus groups into three overarching themes: the importance of relationships, in-school resources, and community partnerships. These themes explored ideas of school culture and community-based education. The discussion in Chapter Five continues analyzing the relationships between these ideas.

CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Through a thorough analysis of the data compiled during the survey, interviews, and focus groups, the researcher determined three broad themes: the importance of relationships, in-school resources, and community partnerships. All of the data focused on answering the central research question of *How does community-based education affect school culture according to teachers' perceptions?* The three themes demonstrated various elements of school culture in two different schools within one county.

Research Question

How does community-based education affect school culture according to teachers' perceptions?

Findings

The researcher used data compiled from the surveys, interviews, and focus groups on determining conclusions about the research question.

Importance of relationships. An idea echoed throughout the literature was the importance of relationships in establishing positive school culture as well as a cornerstone of community-based education (Hollingworth, Olsen, Asikin-Garmager, Winn, 2018; Redding & Corbett, 2018; Tichy, 2017). Building and fostering relationships across the school were prevalent ideas in this study too. The finding meant that school culture was positively influenced by strong relationships, which was a tenant of community-based education.

The first way that relationships were evident as a sign of school culture was in the relationships between administration and staff. Although being a school administrator was a demanding and time-consuming job, the effort leaders put into forging strong relationships with the staff was incredibly beneficial for the school. Schools where the administration truly knew

the staff had higher job satisfaction, commitment, and morale among the staff (Hollingworth, Olsen, Asikin-Garmager, Winn, 2018).

Relationship building was one aspect that differentiated the two schools. A participant from Redhill (pseudonym) School stated that “our administration treats us as fellow decision-makers which enhances our professional relationships” (Redhill Focus Group, Personal Communication, February 14, 2020). Redhill teachers also commented on the amount of mutual respect between administration and staff and how it led to a family-like relationship.

On the other hand, the teachers at Masingo (pseudonym) described a “definite gap” between the administration and staff. She explained how the staff felt that the administration was unapproachable and handled matters unprofessionally, at times. One teacher elaborated that the administration talked extensively about relationship building being a priority but little actually being done to establish relationships between the staff and administration. The focus group at Masingo stated that relationships and trust could be improved if the administration were more approachable and openly communicated with staff. Also, the administration being more visible in the hallways, classroom, and cafeteria would improve the relationship between administration and staff. One teacher mentioned that it was not uncommon to go days without seeing the administration other than in the office. The lack of visibility in the hallways and classrooms negatively impacted the relationship in the opinion of this staff member.

The administration of the two schools handled relationship-building differently. However, teachers viewed the administration more positively at Redhill than Masingo. One of the significant reasons for this seemed to be the openness and positivity of the administration. This attitude led to teachers to buy-in to changes that the administration wanted to make. On the contrary, the administration at Masingo was viewed as having poor communication and not

valuing relationships with students or staff. These factors decreased staff morale and negatively impacted the overall school culture.

Another idea that was consistent in the data in terms of the importance of relationships was the idea of trust between students and teachers. Teachers from both schools mentioned how getting to know students outside of class contributed positively to their relationships with students. This student-teacher relationship was supported by the literature about resilience—especially for students that do not have a stable home life (Roffey, 2016). Students needed at least one person they could trust, that believed in them, and loved them in order to thrive. While some students found this relationship at home, some needed a person at school to fulfill this role—even if it was temporary. In addition to strong relationships, students exposed to trauma needed high expectations to reach their full potential. Students needed consistency, warmth, and acceptance to grow (Roffey, 2016).

Furthermore, teachers at both schools described how beneficial it was to have students in their class for multiple years. Even if students were not in the teacher's class, they still visited the teachers, or the teacher saw the students in the halls. These social interactions allowed for a deeper relationship to form. Teachers from Masingo were especially vocal about the benefits of watching students grow both academically and socially. As a PreK through 12th-grade school, teachers could know a student from age 4 to 18. Teacher-student relationships that spanned years were helpful in noticing concerning behavioral changes from students as well. Teachers described a sense of all the teachers looking out for all the students and not just the ones on their roster for the school year. Long-term teacher-student relationships benefitted students and led to more positive school culture as well as fulfilling the principles of community-based education.

The importance of student-teacher relationships impacted the overall school culture of both schools. Students were more willing to open up to teachers that they trusted. Teacher-student relationships benefitted everyone at the school in terms of increasing positive school culture and decreasing discipline issues.

In-school resources. In addition to the importance of relationships, the availability and accessibility of in-school resources was a consistent theme at both schools. Teachers at both schools were quick to mention that the school provided supplies openly for students. It was unclear whether the school funded these supplies or if the teachers provided the supplies with money out of their own pocket. However, teachers at both Redhill and Masingo stated that students had access to basic school supplies like paper, pencils, and binders.

Even though providing school supplies seemed insignificant, the simple act of having access to supplies helped to lessen the socio-economic inequity within the school. Research showed that low-income students struggled to reach the same levels of academic success as their more affluent peers due to the impact poverty had on available resources (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). The school and teachers providing necessary resources offset some of the negative impacts of poverty or living in low-income homes. Teachers at both schools also mentioned how these supplies were available for all students, which lessened the embarrassment and shame of not having supplies or having to ask a teacher for help due to not being able to afford something. Providing access to necessary supplies improved the school culture of the school and met the requirements of pursuing equity found in community-based education.

One in-school resource that was unique to Redhill was the ELL program. Redhill served a large number of ELL students as well as students that were bilingual or had families that do not speak English. The ELL program worked with regular classroom teachers to encourage students

to learn and use English to have more opportunities following high school. The ELL program also encouraged students to get involved in the school. ELL students were selected to attend Boys' State and participated in the National Honors Society. Also, the boys' soccer team used the nickname "Los Indios" (The Indians) instead of the English version of the mascot. The ELL program worked to integrate often marginalized students into the school community, and the Latinx students contributed to the culture of the school.

In addition to the ELL program, forms and materials for students and families were available in both English and Spanish. Providing material in the primary language spoken at students' homes helped to lessen the culture and linguistic challenges often faced by non-English or limited-English speaking families.

One concerning aspect of the information gathered about in-school resources was that teachers were not completely aware of what help was available for students or the process for getting students needed assistance. At both schools, teachers stated that they referred students to guidance or the nurse if the student required medical, dental, or mental health services. However, the knowledge of teachers stopped at that point. Teachers trusted that guidance and the nurse were able to get students the appropriate help.

Students benefitted from strong in-school resource programs. Much of this responsibility belonged to the guidance department of the schools. Teachers only knew the first step of the process, which was contacting guidance. Beyond referring students, individual teachers were not involved in students' receiving any services.

Community partnerships. Much like medical, dental, and mental health services, teachers did not seem fully aware of community partnerships and their impact on the school. The one consistency in both schools was the notoriety of community sponsorship for athletic

programs. Teachers from both schools mentioned that local businesses and families were quick to donate money and sponsor various athletic programs. One of the reasons for this recognition could be because athletic sponsorships are more visible and posted on banners, t-shirts, and announced at games. Both of the schools had successful athletic programs, so community members might have been more willing to donate money to successful sports programs. The community support for athletics continued for less successful sports and during less successful years.

Another area of community partnerships commonly noted at Masingo was the willingness of local businesses to give jobs to students. Although there were not many businesses in the community, most of the community businesses were willing to hire students and work around the students' school schedules. Also, local businesses partnered with the special education Project ABLE program and allowed students to work in their businesses. This partnership often resulted in a job after graduation. The community's willingness to employ students further helped the community when students earned money that they then spent in the community or used for school expenses.

Implications

With all the data and the central themes of the importance of relationships, in-school resources, and community partnerships, there was a predominant need that became evident—the need for training and professional development on these topics. Along with the training and professional development, strong communication on these topics across administration and staff could benefit the schools.

For example, both schools expressed the importance of establishing and maintaining strong relationships with students; however, teachers were unsure or unaware of the ideas of

utilizing trauma-informed approaches in curriculum and discipline. Teachers could be utilizing the ideas of trauma-informed approaches without knowing the terminology, but explicitly discussing the concepts behind trauma-informed approaches and having productive professional development on the topic could allow teachers to help students even more.

As many as 34 million children had endured at least one adverse childhood experience, or ACE (Gaffney, 2019). Defiance, disengagement, and disruption negatively impacted the school and needed to be addressed to help the traumatized student and other students. When dealing with acute stressors, students were confused, angry, and or engaged in self-blame. The community school also accounted for significant community stressors like chronic drug/alcohol abuse, gang violence, and traumas associated with refugees and asylum seekers (Roffey, 2016). Training on both the prevalence of ACEs and how utilizing trauma-informed approaches positively impacted students could greatly benefit staff and students.

Another benefit from more training and professional development was of the resources available for students—especially regarding mental health, medical, and dental services. Christiana (pseudonym) County had extensive resources available through the Family Resource Center; however, very few of the resources were available at the school. Teachers were mostly unaware of how students received services once referred to the guidance department or the nurse. Explaining the process to teachers as well as services that were available to students could increase the number of students serviced through the county initiatives.

One particular area that could benefit from additional professional development is in the area of mental health services. A study by Barlett and Freeze (2018) identified schools as having the potential to be a pivotal place to offer mental health services. First, there were fewer stigmas associated with receiving support at the school. Students did not have to go to a mental health

professional; instead, the mental health support took place at school, which lessened the anxiety for both students and parents. Additionally, services at school decreased the expense associated with mental health support for families. These services were especially important because the study found that as many as 20 percent of school-aged children experienced a mental health disorder, yet, only 20 percent of affected students received any type of support (Bartlett & Freeze, 2018).

Although classroom teachers were not trained as mental health care professionals, teachers could be incredibly useful in recognizing changes in students that could be caused by or improved by receiving mental health care. Especially in a community-based school where teachers had long-term contact with students, teachers were in a unique position to notice changes in behavior and academics. Teachers and staff members that received appropriate training and knew the proper procedures for referring a student for mental health services could help numerous students and potentially prevent another tragedy like the suicide experienced at Masingo.

The area of community partnerships was another aspect of community-based schools and school culture that could be expanded with proper training and professional development for teachers and administration. Many teachers in this study were not aware of all the programs and ways that community members were helping the schools. They noticed the monetary contributions to athletic programs, but the more subtle ways that community organizations aided the schools often went unnoticed. This signified that there was room to improve community-school partnerships and build stronger relationships that benefited both the school and the overall community.

School-community partnerships did not have to be limited to donating money to the school. Utilizing community members as experts in their fields, serving on mock interview panels, giving presentations to students were all ways to strengthen community-school partnerships. A few teachers noted that all the school had to do was ask, and the community would step up and help in whatever way needed. Often, the most challenging step was to ask for help. Proper training on how to approach community partners

Recommendations

There was limited research available on the interconnectedness between community-based education and school culture. This study left opportunities for expanded research. School culture was a critical component of school success, and schools had the potential to significantly benefit through the use of community-based education strategies. There were numerous ways to continue studying how both community-based education and positive school culture can contribute to the overall success of any school.

The following are specific avenues of research that could be further explored:

Gather data from a larger school. Both of the schools included in this study were relatively small. Masingo had approximately 220 students in the high school while Redhill had nearly 750 students. The study found many similarities in the ability of teachers to establish and maintain positive relationships with students. These results could be due to the comparatively small size of the student body.

A study containing data from a much larger school (1,000-1,500 students) would provide interesting comparisons. These schools were often the schools accused of having students “slip through the cracks” in terms of academic performance or social/emotional changes. Also, it

could be more difficult for staff to establish meaningful, long-term relationships with students if teachers only have the students for one class and then do not see them again.

Include administration in the interviews and focus groups. The focus of this study was teachers' perceptions of how community-based education practices affected school culture. Although administrators from both schools participated in the initial survey, no administrators were included in the interviews and focus groups. The researcher decided that teachers would be more honest in the interviews and focus groups without the pressure (perceived or real) of administrators being present.

Since much of the responsibility of establishing a school culture fell to the leader of the school (Peterson & Deal, 1990), it would be interesting for those in administration to be able to express their opinions and explain how they were working on school culture and community-based education. Studies focused on the perception of administrators would add beneficial research data.

Expand the grades in the study. Another area that could benefit from future research was expanding the grades in the study. This study focused exclusively on high school teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors as sources of data. Although Masingo School served students from PreK through 12th grades, only those directly involved in the instruction of high school students were included in this study in order to maintain comparability with Redhill, which house only high school students.

Data from other grade levels would provide interesting comparisons and information for future research. A researcher could analyze if grade levels impacted the involvement of community partnerships or if the importance of relationships with students increased or decreased with the age of the students. Family involvement in their child's education was

usually more substantial in elementary school and decreased as the child ages (Weiss, Lopez, Kreider, & Chatman-Nelson, 2014). Research on whether the same principle applied to community partnerships could show educational leaders what age levels needed to establish or strengthen community partnerships.

Longitudinal study of school with changing school culture. A longitudinal study of one school over several years would be a valuable avenue of research to explore. This could be incredibly beneficial to the body of research if the school was in a period of transition in terms of school culture. For example, both teachers from Redhill commented on how different this school year was from last year. The administration changed extensively over the summer and established a focus on improving school culture for this school year. These changes were noted in the teachers' comments and the overall survey results from across the staff. A study at this school in the following years, along with an in-depth analysis of exactly what was done to improve school culture and utilize community-based education strategies, could provide useful insight into exactly *how* to transform a school's culture.

Summary

The relationship between school culture and community-based educational practices had many implications for the future of educational researchers. Research indicated that any school could be a community school (The Center for Popular Democracy, Coalition for Community Schools, & Southern Education Foundation, 2016), and school culture had a substantial impact on a school's productivity and overall effectiveness (Peterson & Deal, 1990). However, there was limited research on the connectedness between the two concepts.

Overall, data from this study showed the importance of relationships, in-school resources, and community partnerships. The data also supported the need for training and professional

development on all of these topics. There were many ways that the information in this study could be utilized and expanded on in order to further explore the connections between school culture and community-based education.

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APPENDIX A

Survey Questions

Survey Questions

1. This school has an overall positive school culture.
2. This school develops and values personal relationships between administration and staff.
3. This school develops and values personal relationships between teachers and students.
4. This school seeks to negate the negative impacts of socio-economic status for students.
5. This school seeks to negate the negative impacts of racial inequity for students.
6. This school seeks to negate the negative impacts of cultural and linguistic inequity for students.
7. This school uses trauma-informed approaches when handling student discipline.
8. This school uses trauma-informed approaches when developing curriculum.
9. This school provides access to social, medical, dental, and mental health services for students.
10. This school uses positive approaches, such as restorative justice, in handling student discipline.
11. This school utilizes community partnerships for the benefit of students.

Likert Scale 1-5

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. How does administration develop and value personal relationships at this school?
2. What are some examples of how teachers develop and value personal relationships with students?
3. How does this school offset the negative impacts of socio-economic status of students?
4. How does this school offset the negative impacts of race inequity of students?
5. How does this school offset the negative impacts of cultural and linguistic inequity of students?
6. What are some examples of using trauma-informed approaches with regards to discipline?
7. What are some examples of using trauma-informed approaches with regards to curriculum development?
8. What are some ways this school provides access to social, medical, dental, and mental health services for students?
9. How does this school develop and maintain community partnerships that benefit students?
10. What are some examples of current or past community partnerships? How did students benefit from these partnerships?

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

1. What is the biggest challenge for this school: Socio-economic inequity, racial inequity, or cultural/linguistic inequity of students? Why?
2. What is the process for getting a student help (i.e. medical, dental, mental, housing, etc.)?
3. If you had to describe this school in one word/phrase, what would you use?
4. How do you personally build relationships with students?
5. What role does administration play in encouraging building relationships in terms of staff to staff and staff to student?
 - a. Do you think this impact's the school's culture? Why?
 - b. What could be done to improve this? Or how has it improved in your experience at this school?
6. Do you think community partnerships are important at this school? Why or why not?
7. Would you consider this school a “community school”? Why or why not?

Definition of community schools: According to the Institute for Educational Leadership's *Community School Standards* (2018), A community school is a public school—the hub of its neighborhood, uniting families, educators and community partners to provide all students with top-quality academics, enrichment, health and social services, and opportunities to succeed in school and in life (p. 2).